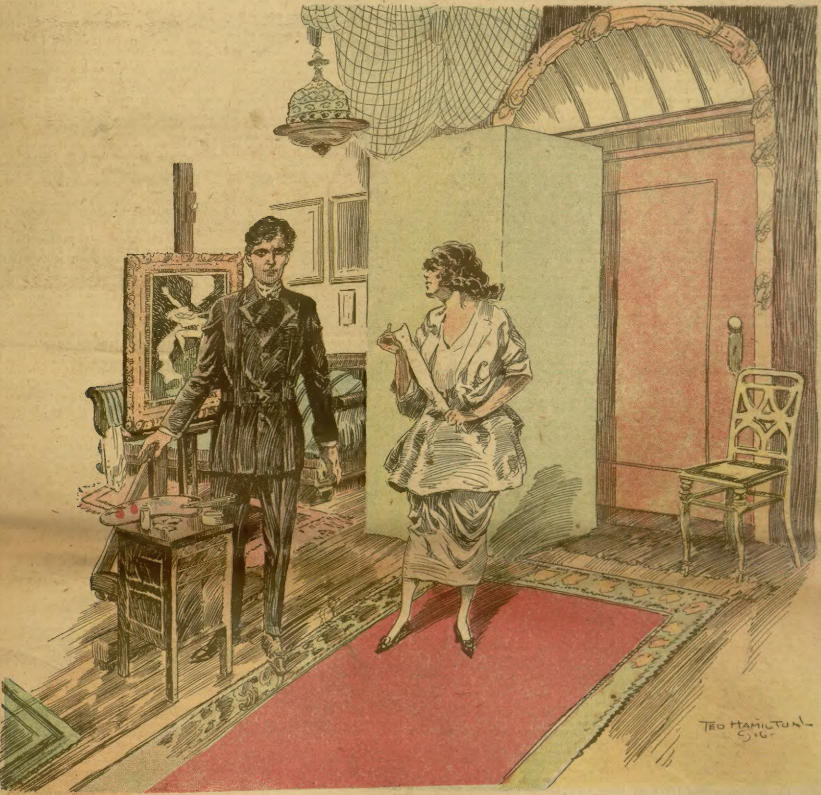
CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XLIV, NO. 34. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1916. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS



MA'M'SELLE FELICE

-:- Or, -:-

A Studio Mystery

By Helen E. Haskell

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CHAPTER I.

ROMANCE AND A GIRL.

THE studio was in semi-darkness, the painted faces on the easels and walls shining out weirdly lifelike in the dusk. In one corner an old Egyptian lamp sent out a faint light and considerable odor.

Kirk Ballinger, middle-aged artist, sat tilted back in his chair by the window, his feet crossed on the sill, his hands clasped behind his head. It was the first warm evening of spring, the kind of an evening that tempts a man to go abroad in search of romance.

The studio door opened with a whisk, then closed softly.

Kirk Ballinger's feet came down from the window-sill.

"Hello! Who's——" he began, but stopped short.

Standing with her back against the door was a girl in a white dress, with a skirt that was modishly draped and short, displaying slim ankles and unbelievably little feet.

Kirk blinked, got to his feet, took a step toward the girl, and reached out foolishly.

"May I hide here for a little while?"

Kirk's outstretched hand jerked back. The girl was real. Romance had dropped plump into Kirk's arms, or if not into his arms, into his dull old studio, which was almost as good.

"Hide from what, madam?" he asked, then flushed. He had called her madam. It was absurd. She was not more than 19 or 20 years old.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for entering so abruptly." Her voice was soft and she spoke with a Southern accent, lingering over her vowels. "I was about to be married, but I changed my mind quite suddenly and ran across the park." She paused, clasping her hands upon her bosom. "There is somebody coming up the stairs! Oh, sir, it would be a very great kindness if you would allow me to hide for a few moments"—her eyes swept the studio—"behind that knight in armor."

Without waiting for an answer she ran across the room and slipped behind the armored figure. Somewhere outside a door opened and closed. The sound of footsteps died away.

Kirk Ballinger struck a match and lighted a gas jet. The girl's frightened face peered at him from behind the gleaming cuirass of the knight. A lock of hair had escaped from the coil at the nape of her neck and rested on her cheek. Kirk saw that she was very lovely.

"Is the coast clear?" she whispered.

Ballinger strode to the door, flung it

open, and looked into the dimly lighted corridor. There was nobody in sight. No sound broke the stillness.

"All clear," he said, closing the door. "Supposing you come out and explain." This with a mental apology to romance.

The girl stepped from behind the armor and stood before him. Forthwith Kirk threw discretion over his shoulder, for she was very beautiful, very fragile, with eyes like a child's that look at and not into one. She must have come to him from some place near by, perhaps from some neighboring studio. For she was bareheaded and without a wrap of any kind. One hand and forearm were covered with a long white glove, the other hand was bare, and from it hung a gold mesh bag.

She was a trifle breathless, and her rapid breathing caused a little hollow to appear and disappear in her soft throat.

"You were good to take me in," she said, coming close to Kirk and looking up at him.

Her eyes were starry, full of mystery, her lilting voice fresh, but very young. It seemed to Kirk, gazing down at her, as if the warm air of the studio had suddenly become electrically charged.

"Will you be good enough to sit down?" he said. He made an effort to speak in a commonplace tone, but his throat seemed to have filled up. His heart was beating a bit rapidly. "You have not yet explained what brought you here—to me."

Her lips suddenly curled up at the corners. There was laughter in her eyes. "I tried three doors on this floor before I found one unlocked—yours." She hesitated between the words, her head tilted to one side in a listening attitude. "If it does not annoy you, I should like to stay just a little longer. I am afraid he saw me come into the building. He may have followed me." Again her lips drooped. "I am very sorry, but I really cannot marry him. We should both be miserable."

She sighed, and again something that was like an electric current swept over Ballinger, thrilling him. It was as if youth had swarmed back in a warm, suffocating flood.

"May I stay?"

The girl was looking up at him. Her sweetness was compelling.

"Of course," he replied in a somewhat smothered voice.

He motioned toward the Roman chair under the window. He was still a trifle excited. Romance and the pretty girl had appeared with unexpected suddenness.

She sank into the chair, her hands resting lightly on its arms, her small feet thrust out in front of her and crossed. Above the black slippers with their glistening buckles showed a pair of dainty ankles in stockings of white silk.

"Did you ever before hear of a bride's running away from her bridegroom and seeking refuge with a strange man in a strange studio on the very eve of her wedding?" she asked, smiling whimsically up at Ballinger. "Five minutes later and I should have been——" She shuddered. "I should have been Madame Arsene de Baylerot. Think of that for a name!" She laughed softly. "I'd never even heard all of it until a few moments ago." She held up her gloved hand, studying the palm, frowningly. Then she pulled a cobwebby lace handkerchief from her sleeve and rubbed her palm, vigorously. "My glove is quite ruined," she said inconsequently. "See what a horrid stain!"

She held her hand towards Kirk; then, before he could examine the glove, peeled it off impulsively and tossed it into the fireplace. It draped itself over the half-burned log, and together they watched it twist and writhe in the heat from the coals below. As it lost its shape, Kirk turned to the girl.

"Tell me, child, how in the world you came to be on the verge of marrying a man whose name, you say, you did not know until a few minutes ago?"

She sighed profoundly.

"Because he wanted me, and I thought he was dying. Of course, I am very glad that he recovered, but it changed everything." She shook her head slowly. "Poor Arsene de Baylerot! I am very sorry for the distress I have caused him. But he was happy for a little while." She clasped her hands beneath her chin. Her eyes took on a far-away look as if she had forgotten the presence of Kirk Ballinger. Under her lacy bodice he could see the rising and falling of her soft shoulders. Suddenly she gave a startled exclamation and sprang to her feet. There was the sound of footsteps in the hall outside.

"Oh," she whispered, "that is Monsieur Baylerot! He has come for me! I should know his breathing anywhere!" She ran across the room, and for the the second time concealed herself behind the armored knight just as a loud knock sounded on the door.

Kirk strode across the room and flung it open. On the threshold, the ends of his waxed mustache standing out like bayonets, stood a perfect giant of a man. He wore a long frock coat, buttoned tightly over his ample diaphragm and spreading open at the top to reveal a pale gray waistcoat and tucked shirt bosom. In his buttonhole there was a fresh white gardenia. His hair was drawn down and plastered in two corkscrew ringlets on his forehead. He seemed to breathe with difficulty, exhaling the air with a hoarse, rattling sound.

"Monsieur," he whispered huskily, his head thrust forward, his eyes sweeping the studio. "Monsieur will pardon me for the interrupt. I am seeking my fiancee, Mademoiselle Felice, who has disappear just as I have discover the clergyman who will unite us into one."

The words wound up in a wheezing whistle. His face had taken on a purplish color.

"I am sorry I cannot help you," said Kirk, and would have closed the door, but the newcomer forestalled him by taking a forward step, interposing his huge bulk in the opening.

"But she is here—she has run into this building. Two young ladies have already informed me that her they have seen. I have the license here." He slapped his chest. "We were to marry tonight."

His eyes roved from one to another of the dusky corners of the studio, then fixed themselves suspiciously on Kirk.

"I am sorry, sir, that I can be of no assistance to you, but you will have to look for your prospective bride elsewhere," said Kirk, coolly.

"But, monsieur, it is useless. I have already looked for her most thoro. On the first floor I have rapped at many doors, and on this landing, also, but without success. Nobody have I found at home until now. You are sure Mademoiselle Felice, one such beautiful girl, has not called here?"

Under the stress of his excitement the man's breathing was growing more difficult. But it aroused no sympathy in Kirk's breast. Indeed, he felt a vague impulse towards assault and battery.

"As I told you, sir," he repeated, "you must look for the young lady elsewhere. Good night."

Kirk's hand was still on the knob of the door. The man bowed ponderously, his hat against his diaphragm.

"Perhaps monsieur will be good enough to say, are there still more rooms on the floor above? I am ill and very much distressed. It is disturbing to lose at the last moment one so beautiful a fiancee."

"There is one studio on the third floor," explained Kirk. "The stairway leading to it is at the end of the hall."

"Monsieur, I thank you," wheezed the Frenchman. "And I beg one thousand pardons that I have intrude. Good night."

"Good night," echoed Kirk, closing the door and thrusting the bolt into its socket.

From outside the man's raucous breathing was still plainly audible. The fellow had been played a cruel trick, and yet—Kirk smiled grimly to himself. He was glad that the girl had escaped from her huge asthmatic suitor.

As Kirk approached the armored knight, the young woman slipped from behind it and stood facing him. She had the look of a naughty child that has escaped a deserved punishment.

"Oh, how shall I thank you, for being so very, very good?" she whispered. And then: "Listen! He is still outside. I am afraid he is going to have another attack. He has been very ill. Perhaps I should go to him. He might die out there alone."

Her troubled eyes searched Kirk's face.

"What do you mean?" he demanded sternly. "Having just escaped from him, you would again go back to him?"

"If he was taken with one of his sudden attacks, I—am—afraid—I—should."

She would have gone on but for the sound of buoyant steps outside. Somebody rapped loudly three times on the studio door.

"Open, hill man," came a voice from the other side.

Kirk Ballinger looked from the girl to the door.

"It's Larry—Larry Horner," he said.

"Hello, old man! Are you there?" came from without.

"Coming," called Kirk, but as he started for the door the girl seized his arm.

"Don't—don't let him in!" Her face had gone white; her mouth was set in a straight line.

"Hold on a second out there," called back Kirk, in answer to a rataplan on the door panels. "Well?" He looked questioningly into the face of the girl.

She glanced toward a door beneath the stairs.

"I'll hide in the kitchenette until you're rid of him."

It irked Ballinger to find that she knew the lay of the Kensall studios. She had none of the earmarks of the professional model. She seemed more like a tender child who had come to him straight from the mysterious realm of enchantment.

"Why hide?" he demanded.

"Because—oh, I could not face him! It would be most unpleasant!"

Outside the door they heard the wheezy voice of Monsieur de Baylerot raised in querulous questioning. The girl was backing towards the kitchenette, her pleading eyes on Kirk's face.

"Have it your own way," said the man, half-relieved that she and Larry Horner were not to come face to face just yet, anyway.

"Oh, thank you!" She caught his hand between her own, pressed it against her cheek, dropped it, made a schoolgirl courtesy, and disappeared.

Kirk went to the door, drew back the bolt, and opened to Larry Horner, robust, full-blooded and grinning from ear to ear.

Against the balustrade leaned Monsieur de Baylerot, gasping redly for breath as he tugged at his collar.

"Chap out here badly cut up—lost his girl," said Larry, jerking his head towards the Frenchman. "Wonder if we can't do something, he's horribly short-winded. Says he sprinted across the square when she disappeared. Low-down trick I call it—throwing a fellow down on the minister's front doorstep." Then to Baylerot: "Come in, old chap. Ballinger 'll give you a glass of something that will brace you up."

"Thank you, no," wheezed the jilted bridegroom. "I must continue my search. She may be upstairs." He rolled his eyes toward the dusky landing above, upon which a single studio, that of Clarke Lindsey, opened.

"Just as you prefer," returned young Horner. "I noticed a light in Lindsey's rooms as I came in. You may find her there. Wish you luck—but if you don't happen to have it, drop in on the way down and we'll mix up something lively. Au revoir."

De Baylerot set his foot heavily on the first step of the stairs.

"Au revoir," he said, with an involuntary, asthmatic groan.

"Why not go along with the fellow?" asked Kirk, standing in the doorway of the studio and cutting off the younger man's entrance.

Larry Horner shrugged his shoulders. "I don't believe in mixing in lovers' quarrels. How's the Fessenden portrait coming on?"

Kirk shook his head and pointed to a draped canvas on his easel.

"Haven't touched it for a fortnight. The lady wanted to look like a Gainsborough. I couldn't see her that way. She hasn't had a sitting since I told her so."

"Better go into landscape or take up house painting, old chap. You're too honest for portraiture. Have you dined?"

"No."

"Then come with me."

"Can't. I've made other arrangements." Kirk Ballinger pulled out his watch. "It's after nine."

Larry Horner did not take the hint. He crossed the room and threw himself into the corner of the big couch that faced the fireplace, clasping his hands behind his head in an attitude of permanence. Kirk remained standing. Every now and then he glanced furtively towards the door of the kitchenette.

"Eating at home?" asked Larry, breaking the silence.

"Haven't decided."

Larry glanced up at his friend quizzically. "Thought you'd made arrangements?"

Kirk flushed. His expression showed his annoyance.

"See here, old top, if you want me to get out, say so," began the younger man, half rising. "I shan't have any hateful feelings about it." His words were interrupted by the flat-footed thump-thumping of steps on the stairs leading from the third floor. The next moment the door, which Kirk had not bolted after Larry's entrance, was thrown open. On the threshold stood the jilted bridegroom, his breath coming violently in gasps, his face livid, with great purple blotches showing beneath his eyes. In one hand he held a woman's hat, a perky bonnet-shaped affair with a flame-colored flower nestling in the midst of a chou of black tulle; in the other he carried a white glove.

"These, these have I found!" he gasped. "They belong to her, but she is not there. Only," he shuddered and looked over his shoulder, "she has disappear!"

Kirk sprang forward and grasped the little hat in a proprietary manner. The Frenchman released it willingly. He seemed laboring under ever greater excitement than before. He stretched out the hand holding the long white glove. "This, too, is hers. I know, because it is so leetle."

Kirk took it from him. "Where did you find them?"

BE SURE to read "MA'M'SELLE FELICE; or, A STUDIO MYSTERY," in this issue. Next week's Ledger will contain a thrilling story entitled, "THE BORDER SPY; or, AMERICAN OR MEXICAN." Boys, look out for the new serial, "ECK LOWREY'S LUCK; or, IN QUEST OF DOUGLAS BEECHMERE." You cannot afford to miss any of these stories.

"Upstairs," whispered the man. "In the studio with the light."

He was backing toward the stairway. He seemed anxious to be gone. His eyes gleamed curiously. His breathing seemed less difficult than before, as if some violent emotion held him in its grip so strongly that it had almost overcome his physical weakness.

"Good night," he muttered, as he reached the top of the stairs.

His movements were quick. To Kirk's surprise he half ran down them, stumbling a trifle as he reached the turn.

CHAPTER II.

CLARKE LINDSEY'S BLOOD.

KIRK still held the long white glove and the smart little hat.

"Spoils of love!" cried Larry from the couch. "What are you going to do with them?"

Kirk thrust the glove into his pocket and laid the hat almost tenderly on his big work table. "Keep them until called for," he said, and paced the length of the studio and back again. He was impatient for Larry to go.

Larry reached out and picked up the hat. "Sort of appealing, isn't it? I should have expected something big and splashing as more suitable to the fiancee of that huge Frenchman." He balanced it on the tips of his fingers, studying it from various angles. "Hats have a lot of personality, old man. Have you ever noticed it?"

Kirk shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not a sentimentalist."

"Um! Where's the glove?"

Kirk produced it reluctantly. Larry Horner laid it along his forearm, then sat forward.

"I'm going up to Lindsey's studio and take a look around," he said. "Perhaps the old grouch is still sheltering the girl. It was a beastly sort of trick she played—little jilt!" He tossed the glove to the table. "Well, I'm off." He sprang to his feet, then suddenly his eyes fixed themselves on a shriveled kid streamer that draped the charred log in the fireplace. Reaching for the poker he pulled out upon the hearth the glove which Felice had tossed into the dying fire. Its hand was brown and contorted. But he could see that it was a left glove. The one the Frenchman had found in Lindsey's studio was a right. This might easily have been its mate.

He smiled quizzically at Kirk Ballinger, who stood watching him with hands clasped behind his back and brows drawn down in a frown.

"Regular cabal against the Frenchman," mused Larry aloud, grinning mischievously. "Well, so long, old man. Lindsey may not be as taciturn as you are." He laughed. "The vivid little headpiece I'll leave with you. I'm off to find the head it crowned."

As the door closed behind Horner, Kirk Ballinger strode across the room and threw open the door of the kitchenette.

"Coast is clear," he announced, and then, "What the dickens is the row now?"

The girl was dabbing her eyes with her diminutive handkerchief. Her lips were blurred and red.

"He said it was a beastly trick—running away from Monsieur de Baylerot. He thinks I should have married him. And—and he called me a jilt!"

"Come, come, don't be foolish! Put on your hat. I'll see you safe home."

"I—I haven't a home." Suddenly she smiled thru her tears. Kirk caught his breath. Her nearness was disconcerting.

"You haven't any home?"

"No."

"But you live somewhere."

"I did live at Mrs. Bonner's, in the house with Monsieur de Baylerot. But I can't very well go back there after running away. I shall have to find another place. Perhaps you can help me."

Kirk guided her toward the couch. "I want you to sit down and tell me all about yourself."

She glanced apprehensively toward the door.

"I'll bolt it again," said Kirk. "There, now, we are safe from interruptions by Monsieur de Baylerot——"

"And from——" she paused.

"Larry Horner," supplied Kirk. "Yes. He'll not be back, at least until he has had his dinner. He's too healthy a young animal to delay that for long. He's probably ordering it by now."

She caught her under lip between her teeth, her face took on an expression of solicitude. "Oh, how thoughtless I am! You have not had dinner, either. I heard you say so. And you have an engagement."

"I said that to stall Larry."

"Please don't let me keep you." She was on her feet, the little bonnet-shaped hat in her hands. "I'll go." She paused. Her lips fell apart. "My coat is upstairs in Clarke Lindsey's studio. I must get it." She started toward the door, but stopped halfway to it, returned swiftly, and, coming close to Kirk, laid her hand on his arm. "Would you mind going up for it?" There was an appealing look in her eyes. "I would not trouble you, only—" she paused and the ghost of a smile quivered across her lips—"I couldn't very well go into the street in search of a lodging in my wedding dress, without a coat, could I?"

Kirk did not answer. The girl had spoken of Clarke Lindsey, the erratic Academician, whose studio was on the floor above. And it was to Lindsey she had first gone when she had made her escape from this Monsieur de Baylerot; to Lindsey, who, during the past year, had shunned his fellow artists, and had lived the life of a recluse, seldom seen outside the walls of his studio. Where had she known Lindsey and when? And who was she? Almost involuntarily he asked the question:

"Who are you?"

She smiled mischievously. "Monsieur de Baylerot has already told you that. I am Ma'm'selle Felice."

"Ma'm'selle Felice? Felice what?"

"That is all."

"But surely Felice is not your surname?"

"Not exactly."

"Not exactly," he repeated. "What do you mean?"

He motioned to the corner of the big Chesterfield. She sank into it, her elbow on its arm. With the tip of a slim forefinger she punched a dimple into her cheek. Then suddenly she looked up at him and smiled with the simple confidence of a child.

"I mean that I have dropped the rest of my name. Felice is all my own. I can paint it on a shop window, if I choose, without offense to anybody. It gives me a comfortable feeling to possess a name that is exclusively mine."

"But your parents——"

"I have only aunts and uncles and cousins," she laughed. "Their eyes seem to be exclaiming, 'What next?' when they look at me. They are all rather more or less at outs with me. I'm an irritation in their flesh. If you knew them and me better you would understand, Mr.——" she paused.

"Ballinger," supplied Kirk.

At the name she sprang to her feet.

"Ballinger!" she repeated. "Oh, can it be that you are Larry Horner's Kirk Ballinger?"

"I had never thought of myself as belonging exclusively to Larry Horner, but I do if it pleases you," laughed Kirk. "You seem to know Larry well."

She colored. "Yes, and now I feel that I know you well, too. Larry used to talk of——"

Footsteps outside the door interrupted her. Then Larry Horner's voice, serious, rather flat, with no trace of boyishness in its timbre.

"Open, Ballinger!" he called.

Before Kirk could answer the door of the kitchenette had closed upon Felice.

"Coming, Larry." Kirk crossed the room, and unbolting the door, threw it open.

Outside, on the threshold, stood Larry Horner, the lines of his face set and hard as if cut in stone. Without a word he entered the studio, closing and bolting the door behind him. On one arm he carried a long black cloth cape, its silk-lined capuchin hood dragging in the dust. Silently he crossed the room, threw the cape onto the couch, and then, turning, held out his hand, palm upward, for Kirk to see. It was stained with something dark-reddish in color.

"Lindsey's lifeblood," he said, and striding to the kitchenette, jerked open the door. Kirk Ballinger sprang to his side.

"You—you here?" exclaimed Horner. "What does it mean?"

In the corner of the tiny kitchen the girl stood crouched against the wall. Kirk did not heed her.

"Lindsey's lifeblood!" he cried. "Explain yourself, Larry." His hand was on the younger man's shoulder, gripping it spasmodically.

Larry Horner shuddered. "That's all I know. I just found Clarke Lindsey on his stair landing—dead—with a knife stuck thru his ribs. And down here I find—Ma'm'selle Felice!"

"Clarke Lindsey, dead! O-h!" The girl's shoulders were hunched forward. There was a horrified look in her eyes. "There—there must be some mistake! Larry——"

She swayed forward, then steadied herself against the sink. Kirk Ballinger looked from one to the other of the tense young faces.

"There's no mistake, Felice," said Larry Horner, quietly. "Clarke Lindsey is upstairs, dead—murdered, no doubt, by that poor mad Frenchman, whom——" He paused suddenly. "Is that your cape?" He pointed towards the couch.

The girl nodded, her fingers pressing her throat. Horner brushed his hand across his forehead. His upper lip was drawn slightly back from his teeth.

"Then it was you for whom the Frenchman was looking?"

"Y-yes."

"Gad! It is hard to believe that you could have engaged yourself to a greasy foreigner like the man you just jilted!"

He stepped back, his angry eyes sweeping her from head to foot, his lip curled in a sneer.

The girl drew up her shoulders. Her eyes were blazing.

"Monsieur de Baylerot is the first violinist in the French symphony orchestra. His music pulls the heart out of one——"

"Some hearts can be pulled back and forth like bouncing balls on rubber strings. Yours happens to be one of them."

He reached out his hand, turned on the tap, and began rinsing the stains from his palm. As the rusty-looking water trickled into the sink, the girl caught her breath with a sob.

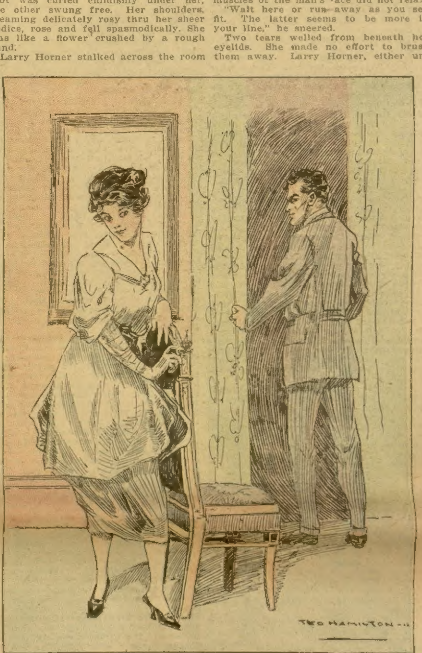
Kirk, watching her, was swept with a sudden feeling of nausea. This girl—her glove had been stained and she had thrown it into the fire a full fifteen minutes before Monsieur de Baylerot's stormy appearance! That meant that Clarke Lindsey was dead, or dying, long before De Baylerot had gone to his studio; and she—had she known it? Ah! Romance was turning to grewsome adventure!

Meantime, Felice was edging past Larry, in her eyes the expression of a frightened fawn. Kirk laid his hand on her sleeve.

"We must talk this over," he said, and motioned toward the couch.

She sank into it with a sigh, her eyelids dropped over her eyes. A pulse throbbed visibly in her throat. One foot was curled childishly under her, the other swung free. Her shoulders, gleaming delicately rosy thru her sheer bodice, rose and fell spasmodically. She was like a flower crushed by a rough hand.

Larry Horner stalked across the room and stationed himself in front of the couch, his back to the fireplace, his eyes on Felice.



Romance had dropped into Kirk's arms.

"Well?" Kirk Ballinger's question broke the silence sharply.

Larry Horner thrust his fingers thru his hair.

"Good heavens! I was almost forgetting Lindsey. As I told you, he's dead, upstairs. Done to death by that poor crazy devil whom your protegee threw over at the altar." He laughed harshly. The girl swallowed a sob. Larry went on without noticing her. "When I left here I went up to Lindsey's. I didn't expect much of a welcome. He and I haven't hit it off well during the past year. The reason——"

He looked down at Felice, his eyes traveling from her face to the bedraggled bunch of sweet peas in her bodice, and on to the little foot in its white silk stocking and its shining, high-heeled slipper. He drew in his breath sharply, then shook his shoulders as if to free himself from the burden of some emotion which he found unwelcome.

"When I reached Lindsey's door, I found it half open. The gas in one jet was burning. I went in and discovered the cape. Then I shouted for Lindsey. There was no answer. I decided that he was out, and that the girl who had jilted the Frenchman had secreted herself somewhere about the room, possibly in the kitchenette. I opened its door. The knob felt sticky to the touch. The room was empty. Then I discovered that my palm was stained. I called Lindsey again. Everything was silent and—I didn't like that sticky stain on my palm. Perhaps that is what prompted me to look for Clarke Lindsey in his chamber. I recall having a rather sickening sensation as I went up the stairs. I found Lindsey, huddled on the stair landing, a knife stuck thru his ribs."

Larry moved toward the door. On the threshold he paused and glanced back.

"Coming, Kirk?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Ballinger, starting after him.

As Kirk reached his side, the younger man whirled suddenly around, crossed the room, and bent above the girl. His eyes were burning beneath his down-drawn brows.

"Wait here until we come back," he said sternly.

Ma'm'selle Felice looked up, and stretching out her hand, touched his sleeve with the tips of her fingers. The muscles of the man's face did not relax.

"Wait here or run away as you see fit. The latter seems to be more in your line," he sneered.

Two tears welled from beneath her eyelids. She made no effort to brush them away. Larry Horner, either unseeing, or heedless of them, stalked across the room and hurried up the stairs after Ballinger.

CHAPTER III.

THE EMPTY FRAME.

LARRY stopped just inside the door of Lindsey's studio, making a hasty survey of its dimly lighted interior. The picturesque disorder, characteristic of Lindsey's surroundings, showed no evidence of a struggle. Everything was as usual. His eyes swept from one to another of the paintings that hung and stood against the walls, then he crossed the room, and striking a match, lighted a gas jet at the foot of the stairs. Above the jet a reflector was arranged, but a small gilt picture frame beneath was empty, excepting for a piece of canvas that hung like a lambrequin over its lower part.

Larry Horner lifted it, stifled an exclamation, glanced furtively in Ballinger's direction, and, reaching into his pocket, pulled out his clasp knife. Deftly, he cut the remainder of the canvas from the frame.

"Poor Lindsey is all in," came Kirk Ballinger's voice from the landing above.

Larry rolled up the square of canvas, which he had cut from the frame, and had just thrust it into his coat pocket when Kirk Ballinger started down the stairs.

"I suppose it is up to us to get word to the proper authorities," Kirk was saying, and then, catching sight of the empty frame, "Gad! what's this?"

"Work of that crazy Frenchman——" began Larry.

"More likely the work of the man who murdered Lindsey," growled Kirk, shaking his head as he examined the empty frame.

"What do you mean? Do you doubt that the Frenchman——"

Kirk Ballinger turned. "Lindsey was dead before De Baylerot entered this studio. Ma'm'selle Felice's glove——"

"S-sh!" hissed Larry, peering into the shadows. "For Heaven's sake let's keep her name out of this." He paused, bit his lip, then went on savagely. "Who else but this man Baylerot had reason for attacking Lindsey? He was mad with jealousy. He found Felice's coat and hat."

"Whoever cut that picture from the frame, Horner, killed Lindsey. The man was dead before Baylerot ever came here."

"How do you know?"

Kirk Ballinger lowered his voice to a whisper.

"The girl's glove was bloodstained when she came to me."

"The glove that was burned?" asked Horner, with a quick intake of the breath.

"Yes. I thought nothing of it when she showed it to me, but now——"

"Good heavens! What a mess!" muttered Larry Horner. "It—it looks like all sorts of trouble for her unless we get her out of the building before we start the hue and cry." He paused, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets. "And if you are c rtain it was not Baylerot——"

"Baylerot is as innocent as you or I. I repeat, the man who struck Lindsey down was the same skulking thief who cut this picture from its frame."

Larry Horner shrugged his shoulders. "Have it your own way, Kirk. But if Baylerot is innocent——" He paused, squinting his eyes, as if to think more clearly.

"Yes?" urged Kirk.

"I suggest our keeping mum about his coming here tonight. The story of how Felice deserted him at the altar wouldn't be a nice one to scatter broadcast. She's in pretty bad with most of her relatives already. This thing—if it got out—would settle for good any chances of a reconciliation. And, confound it, the girl needs protection!" He ground his teeth. "She's always in trouble—or making it."

"Who is she, Larry?" demanded Kirk.

For answer Larry Horner sneered and started for the door. Ballinger hurried after him, laying detaining fingers on his arm.

"Tell me, Horner. Who is the girl, and where did you know her?"

"Who is she? Surely she has told you that. She is Ma'm'selle Felice, who scatters happiness in her wake like flowers. Ma'm'selle Felice, dealer in sunshine and smiles. Wherever her feet have traveled, see what you find!" He waved his hands toward the stairs. "Lindsey dead! Baylerot off his nut! And ?——" He sneered. "Come!"

He threw open the door and ran down the stairs, Ballinger following heavily.

In Ballinger's studio they found a dejected Ma'm'selle Felice waiting for them. Her face had lost its pretty coloring, her shoulders drooped. Even her hands looked heavily weary as they lay palm upward in her lap. She still sat in the great Chesterfield with one foot tucked under her, the other hanging free. But the attitude had lost its coquetry. She looked limp and utterly tired.

At sight of her a wave of pity swept over Ballinger. "Brace up, little girl," he said, with an assumption of cheerfulness. "We want to get you home before reporting this thing."

"Home!" Ma'm'selle Felice sprang to her feet and stood with shoulders poised forward and hands clasped. "Oh, anywhere else, but not home, not back to Mrs. Bonner's—please, not there!"

"Well, then, wherever you say. To the house of some relative——" began Kirk, but his words were cut short by a pair of soft arms that clasped his neck as Ma'm'selle Felice buried her face against his shoulder and burst into a passion of weeping.

The clinging arms, the fragile softness of the young body sent the blood to racing thru his veins. He forgot the presence of Larry Horner, of the grewsome tragedy waiting to be unraveled. It was spring and——

"There, there!" he murmured, smoothing the girl's hair.

A rough hand on his shoulder brought him back to the commonplace.

"This is no time for nonsense, old man!" said Larry Horner, harshly. "Have you forgotten that Lindsey is lying upstairs—dead?"

Kirk Ballinger reached up and unclasped the hands of Ma'm'selle Felice pushing her gently from him.

"You must brace up, little girl," he said coaxingly, looking anywhere but at her face.

She choked back her sobs, and Kirk turned to Larry.

"Suppose you telephone for a taxi—or hold on, we'll pick one up somewhere in the neighborhood."

Larry nodded. "And then where?"

The girl shivered. "You'll not send me back to Mrs. Bonner's, Larry?" she pleaded. "I really couldn't face Monsieur de Baylerot. It would be most unpleasant."

"She and Baylerot live in the same house," volunteered Kirk. "Naturally she doesn't want to go back there."

"No!" sneered Larry. "She might entangle herself in a second engagement with the man and have to run away again."

"This is no time for recriminations, Larry," reproved Kirk. Then, picking up Felice's hat he held it toward her. "Perhaps for tonight you'd better stop at a hotel, unless you have some friend or relative——"

"There is nobody," she murmured, setting the hat on her head and tucking back a curl that strayed over her ear. "And I couldn't go to a hotel because I haven't any clothes. Perhaps, after all, I'll go back to Mrs. Bonner's and marry Monsieur de Baylerot. It would make him happy, and nobody else would care."

"Don't be an idiot, Felice!" growled Larry. "The man's probably cured by now—doesn't want you after the trick you played him. You might go to my sister's for the night and tomorrow——"

"To Lydia's? Oh, no! She dislikes me. I should not be welcome there."

Kirk brought her cape and folded it about her shoulders. Felice fastened it at the throat, then looked from one to the other of the two men who stood watching her.

"Where will you go, then?" demanded Larry.

A smile quivered across the girl's lips. "I might spend tonight in my own room——"

"But Baylerot——" interrupted Kirk.

"I don't mean at Mrs. Bonner's. I mean in my own room in my own house in Fifty-third street."

"Your own house? You said you had no home."

"It isn't a home. It's just a house." She slipped her hand thru Ballinger's arm.

"Will you take me there, please?"

Kirk hesitated. "I'll put you in a taxi——"

"Oh, go along with her, old man. I'll look after things here. After all, it was I who found poor Lindsey."

Larry strode to the door, opened it and peered out into the shadowy corridor, then stepped aside for the man and girl to pass him.

"Good night, Larry," murmured the girl.

"Good night, Felice," returned Larry, and the name seemed to compel his voice to gentleness.

"So long, Horner," said Kirk.

"So long, old man. Don't hurry about getting back. Felice has not yet had dinner. Better blow her off to a little feed somewhere." Larry shot out his hand.

"And you?" asked Kirk, gripping it.

"Oh, I'll be all right. I'll get a bite after reporting this thing. And I'll meet you here some time around——" He pulled out his watch. "Let's say at ten-thirty."

"All right. S'long."

Larry Horner closed the door behind the girl and the man, then stood for a long time, motionless, with his back against it, his fists doubled and his chin thrust out.

"Good Lord!" he said at last. "And I thought I was cured." He laughed disagreeably. "And now it's Ballinger! Poor musty old Kirk! Just 'a rag and a bone!' What idiots, what soft, infernal idiots we men are!"

The sound of heavy feet on the stairs cut short his musings. He flung open the door, looked out and then stepped back with a startled exclamation.

In the hall, facing him, were two uniformed men.

"Good evening. Somebody telephoned headquarters to send some men around here. What's the row?"

"I was about to 'phone you." Larry Horner stopped with a muttered imprecation. He had thrust his hands into his coat pockets and had encountered the rolled up canvas that he had cut from the frame in Lindsey's studio. "I was about to 'phone you," he repeated fatuously. "About—about Lindsey. He's been murdered. His rooms are at the head of the stairs."

Larry stepped back into the studio. The officers exchanged glances.

"Supposing you show us the way," said one, while the other looked past him into the dusk of the room.

"Certainly," said Larry, stepping into the hall and drawing the door partly together behind him. He hoped his coat sleeve covered the protruding roll of canvas.

"Lock your door!" ordered the officer.

"It's a spring lock."

"Well, catch it!"

"I haven't the key. These are not my own rooms, but Kirk Ballinger's. He'll be back around ten-thirty."

The officer scratched his chin and pushed open the door of the studio. "Supposing you stay here, partner, while the young bo and I go up and have a look around." Then catching sight of the wall telephone under the stairs, he motioned to it. "Call up the chief and ask for another man—a detective. All right now, mister, come along."

Larry Horner, his hands plunged into his coat pockets, started up the stairs, the officer following close behind.

CHAPTER IV.

HE DECIDES TO MARRY.

MEANTIME Ballinger and the girl who called herself Ma'm'selle Felice were walking thru Tenth street toward Lafayette place.

"Will you tell me, Ma'm'selle Felice——" began Kirk, then stopped. Out here in the street, with the roar of the Sixth avenue cars filling his ears, the name seemed fantastic and absurd.

The girl looked up at him with a fugitive little smile.

"I will tell you whatever you want to know, Mr. Ballinger," she murmured.

Her elbow nestled into the hollow of his palm. Romance again seemed hovering about them.

"How did you happen to go to Lindsey's studio tonight?" he asked in as commonplace a voice as he could muster.

"Monsieur de Baylerot and I had driven to the minister's." She spoke so softly that Kirk had to bend his head to hear.

"Yes?" he encouraged her, as she paused.

"He had the license in his breast pocket, and several times on the way he patted it. He was very happy. Somehow his happiness and the way in which he seemed to engulf me with his eyes frightened me. And—it is wicked to say it—but I was filled with disgust. I sat far over in the corner of the taxicab, as far from Monsieur de Baylerot as I could get. When we reached the house where he said the clergyman lived, he seized my hand and kissed its palm in the opening that my glove left. And very suddenly I am afraid I hated Monsieur de Baylerot." She hesitated, looking up at Kirk as if pleading for understanding. Then she went on. "He seemed very huge and very terrible as he stood on the steps of the minister's house. When the door opened and he went inside, I jumped from the cab, and without stopping to think where I was going, ran across the square. At the time my one thought was to get away—hide somewhere—anywhere. It was the only thing to do, altho Larry Horner would say that I should have waited and told Monsieur Baylerot how I felt toward him. But that would have been most unkind and very difficult. Besides, I doubt if I could have convinced him. It was really much better to run away and leave him to think what he would. Don't you agree with me?"

In spite of himself Kirk Ballinger smiled. Felice drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"I crossed the square and hurried down one street and into another without heeding where they led. And then, quite unexpectedly, I came upon the Kensall studio building. I remembered Clarke Lindsey, who had painted my portrait. I knew he was my friend. I had been engaged to him for a little while."

"You had been engaged to him?" exclaimed Kirk, doubting his own ears.

"In a way, yes," replied Felice. "It was months ago, but when I saw the Kensall studios I remembered him, and felt that I had found a safe shelter. I knew that Clarke would take care of me. I ran upstairs to his rooms. I rapped. There was no answer. But I heard swift footsteps inside. So I called softly to let Clarke know that it was I. Getting no reply, I tried the door."

"Yes," said Ballinger. "And now we'll stop just there, with you at Lindsey's door, and we'll go into that little restaurant over there, find a quiet corner, and get something to eat. There you shall tell me the rest of your story and then I'll take you home."

"I'm really not at all hungry," remonstrated Felice.

"Perhaps I am," said Kirk, smiling into her upturned face.

"How thoughtless of me! Of course you are," she cried and tucked her hand thru his arm as a child might have done.

They found the restaurant deserted, save for a few dilatory diners who lingered over their black coffee.

"A corner table," muttered Kirk to the obsequious head waiter.

He noticed, as they crossed the room, that more than one pair of curious eyes fixed themselves with open admiration upon his companion's lovely face, and as they seated themselves, he was conscious of the low buzz of conversation that always follows the passage of a pretty woman. It flattered Kirk, altho Felice seemed unconscious of it.

She unfastened her cape, sank with a satisfied sigh into the chair which the waiter drew out for her, and sat leaning forward, her arms resting lightly on the table, her gaze wandering interestedly about the room. In the bright light of the restaurant she looked younger, more alluring and tender than ever.

Afterward, Kirk Ballinger was never quite sure whether it was at this minute, as he stood looking down at her, that he made up his mind to marry Felice, or whether he had arrived at the decision in the moment he first saw her, when she had stood with her back against his door, her arms spread out, the soft loveliness of her figure silhouetted against the dark wood.

But when it was did not matter. He was plunged heels over head into love. It was all he could do to keep from declaring himself as he sank into the chair opposite her. But he must wait a few hours anyway. He must not shock or frighten her. Meantime his eyes caressed her, saw nothing but her.

Felice evidently felt his gaze, for she turned her face toward him, and altho the corners of her lips drooped her brown eyes smiled into his. Wonderful eyes they were! Not the shallow brown that is like velvet with no depth, but transparent and deep, with golden wells in them. They affected him strangely, and as he leaned toward her there is no telling what indiscretion he might have committed in the way of a declaration if the waiter had not, at that moment, called the carte du jour to his attention.

He ordered, then turned again to Felice.

"I left you rapping at Lindsey's door," he said in a low tone.

"Yes," sighed Felice, as if loath to be brought back to her story. "I rapped. There was no answer. But I heard swift footsteps inside, so I called softly to let Clarke know that it was I, and getting no reply, tried the door. It was unlocked. The studio was softly lighted, but empty.

"'It is Felice,' I called. Again there was no answer and I began to think I had made a mistake—that the footsteps I had heard were in the rooms below. I felt very warm, and so slipped out of my cape. The wind had disarranged my hair. I took off my hat and one glove, and began to pin back the stray locks, when I heard a noise in the kitchenette, a sort of stealthy sound, as if somebody were slowly releasing the latch. I sprang across the room, and grasping the knob, tried to open the door. But somebody was holding it on the inside, and just then there came a strange sound from upstairs, as if somebody were in pain. Without stopping to pick up my coat or hat, I ran from the room. Then again I recalled Monsieur de Baylerot. I dared not show myself in the street for fear of him. I did not want to marry him, and yet I knew that if he seemed very, very unhappy and pleaded with me, I might yield."

"And you did not stop to wonder who had locked himself in the kitchenette nor who it was who had moaned?"

"Yes, I did wonder. I paused for a moment outside of the door to listen, and hearing nothing more, went downstairs. You know Clarke Lindsey always had strange people hanging about his studio. He used to say that only the people who knew life, who had loved and suffered much, were of interest to him. He used to bring them in from the streets in order to set down on canvas what he read in their faces. Most of his models had tragic histories. He used to draw them out little by little, watching for some fleeting expression that he wanted to put into his pictures, sometimes waiting days for it."

"I know. He painted strange types." Kirk toyed with the food on the plate that had been set down before him. "And so you came downstairs—to me."

"Yes. I was afraid of coming upon Monsieur de Baylerot if I went outside. Anything was better than that." She smiled whimsically. "You see, I cannot face disagreeable things. I am like my father; he never did. He couldn't. You would have loved him. Everybody did. He was like a boy until the very day he died. He brought me up to think that nothing is worth fighting for. He used to say that all the world would be happy if people would only learn to run away at the right time from disagreeable things."

"And so you ran away from De Baylerot?"

"Yes. When he was very ill I engaged myself to him because he thought that he wanted more than anything else to marry me. When I promised it made him happy and helped him in getting well. You understand, don't you, Mr. Ballinger?"

"I think I do," muttered Kirk, deciding that this was neither the time nor the place to discuss with Felice the ethics of broken promises.

She sighed contentedly, and for a time there was silence between them while she dallied with the various viands set before her.

Kirk watched her until he had convinced himself that her appetite was no better than his own. Then he summoned the waiter and asked for his check.

Outside, he signaled to one of several waiting taxis.

"What number shall I tell the driver?" he asked, as he helped Felice into it.

She leaned forward and gave a number on East Fifty-third street.

As he repeated the number she reached out her hand.

"But you are coming with me," she pleaded.

Her cape had slipped back from her shoulders. Kirk could see the gentle rise and fall of her bosom. Her lips were parted, her eyes wistful. He sprang into the waiting taxi. He felt recklessly young. For the moment he forgot Lindsey, Larry, everybody but the girl beside him. Spring was in the air. Romance was in his blood. Duty be hanged! He reached for Felice's hand. As she yielded it, a surge of happiness swept him.

From the restaurant came a sudden burst of music and voices singing: "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary."

The car leaped forward, whirled around the corner, and dashed into the avenue.

Ballinger leaned forward, his eyes sweeping Felice's face. He was like a young boy overwhelmed with his first love. He wanted to hear her voice, have her tell him everything about herself. A hundred questions crowded into his mind. He adventured one that tormented him.

"How did you happen to engage yourself to Clarke Lindsey?"

"Poor Clarke—he was in love with Lydia Horner, Larry's sister, and she did not care a fillip. They quarreled and afterward she married another man. It broke Clarke Lindsey's heart. I tried to comfort him. You see, I had known him for a long time. He used to come to our house often to see my father." She hesitated, then went on naively: "After Lydia refused him Clarke was very unhappy, and so I engaged myself to him for a little time. I couldn't bear to refuse him anything when he was so utterly miserable, and—he said he needed me. But when the hurt had healed and he was himself again, I explained it all to him in a letter, and he sent me such an understanding letter back! So I knew that he was my friend. He said he would always be that."

Ballinger was still marveling at the girl's strange point of view when the taxi left the avenue and turned into a side street. A moment later it drew up at the curb in front of an unlighted house. The driver reached back and unlatched the door.

"This is my house," said Felice. "Will you come in?"

Ballinger leaned forward to look at the house before which they had drawn up. It was red brick, lower than its neighbors. The white door and facade seemed to cry out for paint. A bit of the black iron balustrade guarding the steps had broken away.

"Will you come in with me?" repeated Felice, a note of pleading in her voice.

Ballinger hesitated. Clearly his duty lay back in the studio where he had left Larry Horner. He looked at Felice. The appeal of her was irresistible. And—spring was in the air.

Confound duty! Larry Horner had gone nosing into Lindsey's studio. Now let him take care of this business with the police! It was his duty, not Ballinger's, to report what he had found. Besides, Felice needed protection. The house looked forbiddingly gloomy and lonely.

"Is there nobody at home?" he asked, stepping to the sidewalk.

"The house is empty," answered Felice, giving him her hand. "It has been empty for more than a year."

Ballinger paid the cabman, and then, sprang to Felice's side.

"Have you the key?"

She took a key from the gold mesh bag. "The vestibule is open," she explained. "This unlocks the front door."

She waited on the doorstep while Ballinger unlocked and threw open the door, then joined him.

"Have you a match? The gas has been turned off—but there are candles in the hall and in the drawing-room." Her voice sounded slightly muffled, as if sobs were struggling in her throat.

Ballinger stepped into the hall and struck a match, holding it up as he groped his way forward, looking for the candles of which she spoke. He found one on a dusty, tiptop mahogany table in the hall, and, yes, there were wax tapers in the two sconces on either side of the old-fashioned white marble mantelpiece in the drawing-room. He lighted them all, then turned and gazed about the high-ceiled room.

On its walls there were a few steel engravings, and even in the dim candle light, he could see by the unfaded squares of color that there had been other larger pictures hanging there at some time. The floor was bare, stained in a dark tone, and so covered with dust that every footstep left its mark. Halfway down the room, against the wall, stood a square rosewood piano with a green baize cover thrown over it. The rest of the furniture was of carved mahogany, the green, rep-covered chairs and sofas but partially protected by the sheets pinned over them. At the end of the room there were massive folding doors of mahogany.

The room was unspeakably dreary, and its musty smell told the story of long disuse. He reached up to take a candle from the sconce, and as he did so the air about him seemed suddenly vitalized. He knew without looking that Felice was close beside him. He felt as if it were a tangible thing the magnetism that enveloped her like an aura.

This mysterious story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

The Wireless Plot

Or, On Dead Man's Reef

By Marquis James

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Begun in No. 33, August 12. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

THE lone castaway, riding a broken spar, whom Goodrich from his post in the doorway of the robbers' cave had seen washed upon the beach, was none other than Jim Darling. At the time Goodrich thought he recognized the face as revealed momentarily under the livid glare of the lightning, but again, Bill hesitated to accept the evidence his eyes presented. How Jim could have survived in the sea that was running was past his understanding.

Yet such was the case. Darling was washed overboard by the wave that engulfed the City of Nome while he and the mate of the vessel grappled in death grips. Together they were carried out to sea. By the chance clutch of a near-drowning man, Jim had grasped a piece of wreckage from the ship. He caught hold and endeavored to pull the seaman up beside him. They were adversaries no longer. But the sailor, mistaking the attempt at rescue for a blow, attempted to strike back. At the same instant another breaker swamped them. With effort Darling clung to the spar, but the sailor was swept away and never seen again.

After riding the spar for an hour, Darling was washed upon shore by the sheerest of chances. He had no idea where he was, and was thankful only for his miraculous escape. He immediately sought a passage in the cliff and struck out inland, but had progressed only a few rods by the time Goodrich came shouting along the beach. The roaring surf, however, smothered the American's voice, and Darling was unaware succor was near.

Had it been winter, Darling could not have lived three hours in his drenched clothing, which almost at once after coming in contact with the air would have become sheets of ice. But the season was the short Alaskan summer, and the wind, while terrific of velocity and chill and raw, was not freezing. The buffeting sea, however, had worn his strength, and Jim was all but exhausted when cast ashore. He managed, however, by half-crawling and half-walking to find a passage thru the cliff soon. He recognized the spot, and knew he was a scant few hundred yards from Salazar's cave. He could have gone that way, but since his escape was thus far accomplished, he determined to wait until morning, at least, in the hope he might encounter some trappers wso could lead him back to civilization. If he failed in this he consoled himself with the thought that at least he could make his way back to the cave.

In a waterproof case, Darling carried matches. When sufficiently far inland that the blaze could not be noticed by the lookout at Salazar's cave, he built a fire and dried his clothing as best he could. Then, while every bone in his body ached, and the salt water in his cut and bruised limbs tortured him, he dropped off to sleep from overwhelming fatigue.

It was broad daylight when he awoke. The day had dawned bright and fair. The Alaskan summer is short, but it makes up in intensity what it lacks in duration. Temperatures in the eighties are common, and ninety weather is not uncommon during the months of July and August, even beyond the Arctic Circle. Darling's clothing was dry, and while every joint was stiff, he was happy to learn that he had come by no serious or disabling injury. His most annoying discomfort was his ravenous hunger. But as breakfast was out of the question, he set out at once, traveling due north and using the sun as a compass. The fur-trading post of Grady, he knew, lay about twenty miles north of Salazar's cave.

Darling, while under no deception as to the character of Alaskan overland traveling, believed he could make it, living on roots and berries in two days. He hoped, however, to intercept some trader or native on the way. His eventual destination was Nome, and he must reach that port by August 1st, which was just twenty-one days distant, for on that date the Portland was scheduled to sail for the States, carrying its cargo of gold—and Virginia Bainbridge, who made the voyage with her father. He must reach Nome before the Portland sailed and warn Captain Bainbridge of Salazar, that he might not fall into the trap.

Fortune favored Darling, and within an hour after he had started he ran onto a trail—the Grady trail which would lead him to his destination. Now, an Alaskan trail is more or less a complimentary name for a barely distinguishable path thru the rugged Northern wastes, but at that it is an improvement upon wandering at random. Darling counted himself a speedy traveler, when by noon he calculated he had traversed five miles, or one-fourth of the distance to Grady.

The second stroke of good fortune came along in the afternoon, when hunger and the experience of the night before were beginning to tell and Darling's feet began to get almost too heavy to lift. Jim encountered a trapper. The pelt season had passed, but this trapper, a native of Grady, explained that he had come out from the post to hunt up some traps which had been lost the winter before in a snowstorm. The snow had melted, and the trapper, after a half-day's search, had found the missing traps. The hunter shared his rations with Darling, and the two made camp for the night. Setting out early next day, they reached Grady before nightfall.

Darling rested a day at Grady—which was all the time he dared to lose—and then, accompanied by a native Indian guide from the post, again set out north, bound for the Yukon River, where he intended to pick up a steamer at Koyukuk. Before he made his plans, tho, Darling removed his gold belt which he had been wearing the day Salazar's men found him in the drifts, and counted his money. With careful planning, he figured he had just enough to reach Nome.

By the river craft he could proceed to the mouth of the Yukon and thence on to Nome. His schedule would put him in Nome two days in advance of the date set for the departure of the Portland, but making allowance for delays, which are the rule rather than the exception with Alaskan travel, he hesitated to tarry more than a day in Grady, despite the much-needed recuperation. The guide engaged was a competent one, who knew the Northern trails on Darling knew the streets of his native San Francisco, and the journey to Koyukuk was made in five days, which is a record trip, considering the terrain of that region.

Darling was disappointed to learn that the Flower of the North, the sturdy river steamer, which plies the northernmost navigable stream in the world, would not arrive until the day following, having been delayed by an accident at St. James Mission, up the river.

There was the usual number of passengers assembled from the country about, waiting to take passage on the steamer. And there were the usual curious ones assembled just to participate in the impromptu reception which is given every time the river steamer, which makes only four trips a year, warps in at a Yukon dock. For the arrival of the Flower of the North is quite an event on the Yukon.

The boat arrived amid a chorus of hails and helloes exchanged between those on board and on shore. Darling had dismissed his guide, but the latter, simple native of the North country that he was, had remained to witness the spectacle of the arrival of the Yukon packet. Darling went aboard, mounted to the deck, and leaning over the rail became an interested spectator of the animated scene about him. After an hour, the taking on and discharging of mail, cargo and passengers had been completed, and the steamer, already a day late, had no time to delay in Koyukuk. With two hoarse blasts from its whistle, hawsers were cast off, and the craft again veered out into the stream.

Darling was still gazing at the receding, hat-waving throng assembled on the Koyukuk landing, when he heard a voice behind him call his name. In quick surprise, he turned upon his heel.

"Sam Preston! As I live and breathe!"

As the syllables burst from Jim's lips, his hand met in crunching clasp with the bronzed digits of his old roommate at the University of California.

"Holy mackerel! If it ain't Jim Darling!" ejaculated the other. "For the love of Pedro, where did you come from?"

"Oh, down the coast a way. And you?"

"All the way from Dawson," supplied Preston. "And now let's have an account of yourself. Supposed you was in Frisco running railroads."

"Hardly. I've been in Alaska a year. Came here to run down a little of your famous gold dust, but the gilded powder seems to have eluded me fairly well. What, might I ask, takes you so far away from Market street?"

"Well," returned Preston, "I came up to bag that gold dust you missed."

"What luck?"

"Oh, fair to middling. Cleaned up about fifty thousand in a year, I should say."

"Great stuff, Sam! Tell me about it!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE former college chums repaired to Preston's stateroom, where Darling listened to the thrilling story of the adventures of the former University of California athletic star's year in the gold fields. Hardly so thrilling as Darling's experiences were they, but this was to be expected. Preston's account, however, was well worth listening to.

"And now," elicited the story teller, after he had finished his recital, "let's have something about yourself. What on earth takes you up here grubbing around in search of wealth you don't need?"

"Sam," replied Jim, "I said I had been mining, or trying to. I want to correct that assertion. True, I came up here to do prospecting, but, caught in the coil of curious circumstances, my energies have been diverted to other channels."

"Gee whillikers, Jim!" Sam burst forth. "You talk as seriously as if you had killed a man. What's it all about? Got in wrong, old man? If you have, just out with it. Old Sam Preston sticks by a pal till the last dog's dead, you can bet on that."

"Thanks, Sam," responded Darling, profoundly touched by his friend's generosity. "It is a serious matter, and I'll need your help. Sam, while you have been making fifty thousand dollars in gold in the past year, I have assisted in the stealing of several millions—theft of actual gold."

"Jim!"

"And not only that," proceeded Darling, "but I have witnessed the murder of perhaps twenty men."

"My God, Jim! Have you gone mad?"

"Sometimes I think I shall, every time I recall the look on the face of the mate of the City of Nome as he sank beneath the waves for the last time."

"What's that you say of the City of Nome, Jim?"

"Why, she's sunk, Sam, and her crew perished to a man. Seven million in gold she carried. I was a member of the pirate band that boarded her and carried off the gold."

"Pirate crew? Seven million in gold? Ship sunk? Crew perished?" gasped Preston.

"Sh-h! Not so loud, Sam," cautioned Darling. "What I say is true, but my story is for your ears alone."

"Well, for Lord's sake, fire away, Jim! Let's have the scenario of this Sindbad the Sailor yarn you've sketched for me. If the Nome's sunk, it's back to the Klondike for me, tho, for my fifty thousand was on that boat, en route to the States."

Darling, at this behest, related the complete story of his adventures from the day he and Preston had parted upon receiving their diplomas at Berkeley until they had met again on the banks of the far Yukon. Darling told of his love for Virginia Bainbridge, of his trip North, his being lost in the Arctic storm and rescued by members of Salazar's company, and how, to save his life, he had become a member of the pirate chieftain's retinue. He told of the wreck of the City of Nome and his miraculous escape from death at sea, and his long mush to Koyukuk, where he boarded the Flower of the North.

"Our Oriental friend, Sinbad, indeed lived a drab and monotonous existence, as compared to yours, old pal," commented Preston, who had listened in open-mouthed astonishment to Jim's recital. "After all you've gone thru with I should thank my lucky stars that it was only my gold dust and not me that was aboard the City of Nome. I had planned to go on that boat, but was unable to make it to the coast in time."

"Forget that fifty thousand. I'll make that good if you'll see this matter thru with me. I've got to get to Nome and

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see that the Portland doesn't sail until I have forewarned Bainbridge."

"I'm with you, Jim. Not for the fifty thousand, but for old time's sake."

The pact thus formed, the two settled themselves for the journey down the Yukon, which is a river trip without parallel for scenic beauty on earth. It brings the vastness of the untraveled North home to one as nothing else can, and forces upon the consciousness the truth of man's insignificance before the mighty works of Nature.

The exasperating part of the journey was the frequent and recurring delays, which kept the Flower of the North from regaining the day it had lost at St. James Mission. Arriving at Kotlik, at the mouth of the river, a day late, a boat across Norton Sound to Nome would put Darling and Preston there but twenty-four hours before the Portland was scheduled to sail, which is too small a margin to calculate on with assuredness in Alaska. A day's delay reaching Kotlik or on the way across the sound, and they would miss the boat at Nome.

Happily, however, the little steamer which plies Norton Sound had waited the coming of the Flower of the North at Kotlik, and within two hours after Darling and Preston had left the river boat they were on the larger vessel and out to sea, bound for the great gold port of Nome. Ten hours are required for the passage from the mouth of the mighty Yukon to Nome. It was midforenoon when the hardy little vessel cast anchor.

Darling scanned the waterfront for the familiar lines of the Portland. Nome's waterfront is not so extensive that one may not identify every vessel in the harbor at a glance. The harbor is a poor one. The water is so shallow that boats of any considerable draft must cast anchor a quarter of a mile off shore and transfer cargoes by lighter boats and passengers by small boat. It required no second glance to assure Darling that the Portland was not there.

"Great Scot!" he gasped, "I hope I haven't missed her, Sam. Let's go in here and inquire."

The two headed for the navigation offices. Seeking out the person in charge, Darling demanded:

"When did the steamer Portland sail?"

"Two days ago," responded the official.

"But she was not due to sail until tomorrow, August 1st," remonstrated Darling.

"Yes, I know, but Bainbridge, in charge of the Portland, received some sort of information two days ago, and he cleared a few hours later and put to sea. I've never got the straight of just what it was. Some say one thing and some say another. But it must have been something mighty urgent to take him back to the States so sudden, for he left without taking on board more than a fourth of the cargo."

"And what was his cargo?"

"Pelts."

"Did his daughter go with him when he sailed?" inquired Darling, taking a new tack.

"Tall, golden-haired lass, with big blue eyes—prettiest girl I ever saw in Nome? That Bainbridge's daughter?" queried the navigation officer, with curiosity whetted afresh.

"Yes."

"Well, the captain's daughter didn't accompany him on his last voyage, then."

"Thank Heaven for that!" breathed Darling to himself. And then to the official: "Where would I be likely to get additional information regarding Bainbridge's hasty departure? Some one here must have known the cause of it."

"Well, it's pretty much of a mystery, but if your business is important enough I reckon Bigbee, collector of the port, would know if anybody does. Bigbee and Bainbridge were pretty close."

"Thanks," said Darling. As the two left the building he said to Preston: "Let's find this man Bigbee now."

"Jim," said Sam, "that fellow said the girl didn't sail with her father. Then she doubtless is in Nome. Strikes me as if it might be a good thing to look into that angle of the matter."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Jim, in disgust at his own oversight. "Might have asked that chap about her, but I was so allfired worked up about the sailing of the Portland that it slipped my mind."

"I wonder what the sailing of the Portland in advance of the schedule means?" interjected Sam.

"It beats me," Jim replied. "But it looks suspicious. Looks like Bainbridge might have got an inkling of the Dead Man's reef trouble and have gone to investigate. In such a case, of course, he would hardly care to take his daughter along. Well, here's the collector's office. Let's step in and see Bigbee."

The two entered the square white frame building over which flew an American flag.

CHAPTER VII.

"MR. BIGBEE?" Jim Darling inquired, addressing a large man of rather rotund proportions, who had turned from a much-littered desk to greet his callers.

"The same," responded the collector. His sonorous voice went well with his rugged exterior. "What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

Jim introduced himself, presented Sam, and at the collector's invitation drew up chairs.

"Now, gentlemen, what is your business? Without discourtesy, I would like to request you to be as brief as possible, as this is the last day of the month and I am busy making my reports up for the first."

The manner of the genial collector of the port seemed affable enough, and Jim, without prelude, launched the query:

"Mr. Bigbee, why did the steamer Portland sail two days ago, three days ahead of her schedule?"

Bigbee's eyes narrowed at the question. He regarded Darling intently for a long moment, before he spoke.

"Why," he countered, in measured accents, "do you ask?"

"Because," returned Darling, keeping his gaze steadily upon the official, "I am a friend of Captain Bainbridge. I have reason to believe that he suspected all has not been going well with the shipments of gold which have been sent secretly, under false manifest, down from Nome to Seattle. I have reason to believe he had word as to the fate which befell the City of Nome, which left this port a month ago and has never since been heard from. The Nome, while her papers show a cargo of pelts, carried more than $7,000,000 gold, and Bainbridge knew it."

Bigbee's heavy jaw dropped in amazement as one astounding statement after another came from the lips of his caller.

"On what authority do you base these most extraordinary surmises, Mr. Darling?" interrogated Bigbee, when Jim had concluded.

"By the authority of my own absolute personal knowledge," shot back Darling.

"And how, might I ask, have you come in possession of this information?"

"That is something I cannot divulge."

"Under no circumstances?" urged Bigbee. There was just a hint of threatened coercion in his tone. Jim detected it.

"Under no circumstances whatever," he replied, in a voice that answered the veiled challenge.

Silence fell upon the three men. Bigbee bit his lip in thought. Jim shot a furtive glance at Preston. Sam's face was tensely serious. Jim knew what troubled his friend. Sam was afraid Jim had gone too far and had said too much. Suppose Jim should be identified as a member of Salazar's band? A pretty kettle of fish, indeed!

"But we are getting away from the question," resumed Darling, at length. "All I asked was the reason for the sailing of the Portland. I hardly see how that involves a cross-examination of my motives."

Suddenly Bigbee's face darkened.

"Well, it does, young man," he snapped. "And until you answer some of my questions I shall answer none of yours. Good day, sir."

"One question more," persisted Darling. "I am informed that Miss Virginia Bainbridge, the captain's daughter, did not accompany her father. I assume then she remains in Nome. Virginia and I are old friends. Could you tell me where I would be most likely to find her?"

"Miss Bainbridge is not in Nome," answered Bigbee, a bit gruffly, tho the first flash of his anger had disappeared. His change of manner, however, had not the aspect of sincerity.

"Not here?" queried Jim uneasily.

"No, she sailed on the steamer City of Nome, which, you have been good enough to inform me, has been lost at sea."

Like a man stunned, Jim raised his right hand to his throbbing temples. He regained control of himself after the space of a few seconds, however.

He muttered a word of out-of-place thanks to Bigbee, and he and Sam took their leave. Bigbee, thru the open window of his little office, gazed at the retreating figures as they made their way up the rough, uneven main thorofare of Nome. Then he pushed a button on his desk. The next moment a man from the room adjoining responded.

"Graves," said Bigbee, addressing his secret service man, "I want those two men shadowed."

He pointed out of the window to Darling and Preston.

"Very well, sir," responded the secret service man, and turned on his heel.

"And Graves," called back Bigbee.

The detective faced about.

"Not only shadow them, but get something on them," appended the collector of the port, in an insinuating tone. "It appears that—er—these men know a little too much about these misleading manifests that have been going on on the Russian gold boats. We've got to save our own skins, you know. This City of Nome trouble is likely to kick up a nasty mess unless it's handled right from this end. Understand? Get something on these men."

"I have you, boss," replied the sleuth, with a knowing twinkle in his eye.

CHAPTER VIII.

"TOUGH tidings, old man!" consoled Sam. "But buck up, maybe after all she was saved."

"Not a chance!" groaned Jim. "Every soul aboard the Nome perished. Wasn't I there myself?"

By inquiry at hotels and other places Darling had verified the story of Virginia Bainbridge's departure on the City of Nome. They discussed the matter in a hotel room they had engaged.

"Well, if you've painted that bunch of highbinders in their true colors," pursued Preston, "death is about the kindest fate that could befall a woman about to happen in their clutches."

"That's true, Sam. But I'll have my revenge. I vow I will!" burst forth Jim, his passion for vengeance flaming anew. "I'll go down there with enough dynamite to blow Alaska, and send that outfit into eternity."

"Come, Jim, let's take a walk," urged Preston, in an effort to get his friend's mind off the tragedy.

Jim suffered himself to be led from the hotel. They strolled along the broad main street of Nome. Darling was abstractedly silent.

"I've got it figured out at last," he spoke suddenly, as one brightening under the impetus of a happy idea. "I'm going to cable my father for enough money to charter a boat. Then we'll buy up all the dynamite in Nome, and we'll go down there and tumble that old cliff into the ocean."

"Better study the matter over a little more," cautioned Preston, who was willing to stand by his friend, but feared Jim already had overstepped his bounds. Sam had not said a word during the interview with Bigbee, but he had kept his eyes and his ears wide open the while. He did not trust the big collector of the port. His mind connected up the strange behavior of that official and the story Jim had told of the false manifests. He deemed Bigbee a poor man to go to for solution of the matter, for unless he was badly mistaken that functionary was pretty deeply involved in the mix-up.

"Let me prevail on you to put it off until morning," he begged Jim. "Then if you still think that is the best course to take, why, I am with you."

"But why wait until morning and lose just that much time?" argued Jim.

"Impulse is a poor counselor," advised Preston. "I think I can appreciate how deeply you feel in this matter, but let us leave rash deeds to others, and think twice before we act, and we will win out in the end."

As Preston strove to impose reason upon his companion, Graves dogged their steps, apparently immersed in a month-old Seattle newspaper, but in reality catching every syllable that passed between them. "Get something on them!" That was the order from higher up, and Graves intended to make good, his alacrity being prompted by a desire to protect his own hide as well as carry out the injunctions of his immediate superior, Mr. Bigbee.

Darling heeded the restraining words of his old schoolmate, and walked along some distance in silence, with his head bowed as he fought the matter out in his own heart. Sam was pleased with the evident effect of his words.

"Jim, who was that?" Darling's companion exclaimed suddenly.

"Who's what?" demanded Darling, confused by the unexpectedness of the interrogatory.

"That man who just passed us. He never took his eye off your face from the time he turned the corner yonder until he passed us by. I believe he recognized you."

"Didn't know I had any acquaintances in Nome," replied Jim. "Where is the fellow?"

"There he goes now," said Sam, turning and pointing toward the receding figure of a man two hundred feet away. At that moment the man who had aroused the comment turned suddenly. Recognition was instantaneous.

The man was Whitehead Davey, agent of Salazar! Davey and Darling had made each other's acquaintance on the occasion of one of the former's periodical visits to Salazar's cave headquarters. A lumbering Swede he was, whose unpigmented mat of hair gave him the sobriquet Whitehead. Darling halted in his tracks, a frozen statue of fear. Davey, without saying a word, but with his savage eyes riveted on Jim, slowly advanced. Graves, as astonished as any one else at the unusual turn of events, walked on a few paces and stopped, observing every move of the trio over the folds of his newspaper.

Davey, whose duty it was to flash wireless information to Salazar of the movement of the gold ships, came up to Jim, and thrusting his unsightly visage into the latter's face, demanded in a threatening half-whisper:

"How come you here?"

"Salazar sent me, if you want to know," flung back Jim, who had recovered his composure remarkably well. "And I might also ask you, what are you doing here? You are supposed to be in St. Michaels."

"It's a lie! Salazar never sent you!"

"Well, I am here," Jim remarked coolly. "Whether Salazar sent me or not, what are you going to do about it?"

"Made your getaway, eh?" hissed Whitehead Davey. "And you must have been pretty cute about it to have slipped away from Salazar. Up here to squeal, I reckon, eh? Well, I'll fix your clock."

With that Davey's big right arm flashed into the air. An ugly knife blade gleamed as the Swede drove it with tremendous power straight for Darling's heart. Jim raised his arm to parry the blow, but the driving force of the Swede's sinews knocked it helpless to his side.

Crack!

A revolver shot. With a jangle of breaking steel the knife blade went to pieces as Preston's bullet clipped it off at the hilt. The bladeless weapon struck Darling with sufficient force, however, to

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send him sprawling. Preston's quick, sure aim, however, had saved Jim's life.

With one adversary down, Davey sprang at Preston. The revolver spoke again, but this time the bullet went wild, as the mighty Swede bore down upon Sam, dealing him a sledge-hammer uppercut blow with his hamlike fist, which sent the smaller man reeling. Davey followed up his opportunity and seized the American's weapon before he could fire again. Jim, meantime, had regained his feet. He rushed to assist Sam, who was faring badly at the hands of the infuriated Davey, who threatened every instant to wrench the revolver from Preston's grasp.

The three mixed it in battle royal. The Swede was a good match in brawn, weight and rough-and-tumble fighting tactics for his two opponents. During the mixup, Graves remained strangely aloof. The sleuth had plans of his own which did not include participation in a street fight with three other men. In a few minutes a couple of Nome policemen and a deputy sheriff ran up, and after generous use of clubs subdued the trio of combatants, and with ears deaf to the pleas of the prisoners, started to lead them away to the city lockup.

Darling was bleeding from a wound in his scalp, inflicted by a blow from one of the policemen's clubs. Preston had suffered a discolored eye and cut lip in the fracas. Davey was even more marked up than either of the others. He became panic-stricken at the intervention of the officers of the law, and made a desperate attempt at escape, which he ceased only when beaten into submission.

As the police led the three away, firmly handcuffed, Graves, who had up to this time been no more than an interested spectator, stepped up. Drawing aside his coat lapel, he exhibited his badge of office.

"As a member of the United States secret service," he proclaimed theatrically, "I will take charge of these two men in the name of the United States Government." He indicated Darling and Preston.

"What's this?" protested one of the policemen, making no move to release the prisoners.

"They're wanted for a Federal offense, which I fancy will take precedence over your charge of disturbing the peace," remarked Graves, authoritatively.

"What's the charge?" persisted the policeman.

"Complicity in the conspiracy which resulted in the wrecking of the steamer City of Nome," asserted the secret service man pompously.

His words had rather an electrifying effect on the local officers. In Nome the disappearance of the steamship had been the principal topic of conversation for a week. And while such had been hinted, this was the first direct intimation that the vessel was lost as the result of foul play.

"And you don't want this one, then?" questioned the policeman, nodding toward Whitehead Davey.

"No, you can have him," replied Graves, "since the most serious charge you can place against his name is disturbing the peace and quiet of the city."

The unexpected had been happening with such lightning-like swiftness during the last few hours that Darling and Preston took their arrest at the hands of Graves without emotion. This, however, did not alter the seriousness of the situation. Graves, in obedience to Bigbee's orders, had certainly delivered the goods.

Jim and Sam were incarcerated in jail. Whitehead Davey was taken before the police magistrate, and on the payment of a fine was released. He lost no time in hastening to St. Michaels to apprise Salazar by wireless of what had occurred.

CHAPTER IX.

WHITEHEAD DAVEY'S aerogram to Salazar surprised no member of the pirate band as little as it did Bill Goodrich. It merely confirmed what Goodrich already had been bold enough to suspect—that the lone survivor of the City of Nome wreck had been Jim Darling. And why Darling should have headed for Nome instead of the States also was clear to him, for Bill Goodrich knew the whole story now of the love affair between Jim and Virginia Bainbridge. He knew Jim had gone north to prevent Virginia's sailing on the Portland. And again he knew of his disappointment, since Virginia had been sent ahead by her father on the Nome. Bill Goodrich had this intelligence straight from Virginia's own lips!

For the woman Goodrich had secreted in the hidden grotto of the cave was none other than Virginia Bainbridge herself. Bill had rescued her from the sinking vessel, and in the confusion had thrown a seaman's slicker about her shoulders and helped her safely into Salazar's yawl. He saw her ashore and into the cave without mishap, and during the drunken orgy of celebration which followed had managed to stow her away in the little niche in the wall of the subterranean chamber.

In the dead of each night he had stolen to her side, bringing food and drink, by which the girl kept body and soul together, tho life in her cramped prison was an existence of almost unimaginable torture. Bit by bit he had heard her story, and in return he told her the amazing tale of how Jim Darling for a time was a member of the robber gang.

At the time Davey's wireless message crackled thru space from St. Michaels to Salazar's cave, Darling was in jail in Nome, believing Virginia dead; Virginia was as much a prisoner in the cavern, grieving over the supposed loss of her sweetheart, who she dared not hope had met any other fate than death at sea.

The message from Whitehead Davey threw Salazar and his crew into a frenzy of consternation. The word came as a bolt from the blue. The cunning Spaniard had reckoned himself safe and secure in the fastness of his cavernous retreat. How the United States secret service could have come by information which would link Darling with the sinking of the City of Nome was more than Salazar could comprehend. A queer turn was added to the case, also, when the Federal official took Darling and Preston, the latter a man unknown to either Salazar or Davey, and relinquished Davey to the local officials, from whom he soon gained his liberty. Was this a trick on the part of the secret service to allow Davey his freedom while they profited by the damning evidence of his actions? This and a hundred other hastily spun conjectures darted thru the alert brain of the bandit chief.

But whatever may have been his apprehensions, Salazar made no attempt to flee. The Viscount, the tramp steamer which had brought Salazar and his crew from the Orient, however, was kept coaled up and in readiness to sail at an hour's notice. But such always was the case. Salazar kept the vessel in a sheltered inlet not far from the cave. By the peculiar formation of this miniature harbor, the craft was invisible from the open sea. Thus, any time Salazar should be hard pressed he had but to make a dash for his boat. Armed with two four-pounders, fore and aft, the tramp was prepared to give battle with anything short of a war craft.

Salazar, while he confided his designs to none, intended to wreck and loot the Portland, then abandon the cave. His booty already totaled millions—three-fourths of which was his, and the remaining quarter to be divided equally among his retinue. Salazar did not know that the Portland had sailed without its cargo of gold. Whitehead Davey had gathered misleading information on this point and in turn had misinformed his chief. Salazar was waiting for the Portland, unaware that it was to be an empty haul.

And what of Captain Bainbridge's early sailing, the cause of which was enshrouded in so much mystery? Salazar reckoned not with that.

Bill Goodrich, while less surprised than the rest over the receipt of the word of Darling's dramatic appearance and arrest in Nome, received the news with strangely conflicting emotions. Certainly a thrill of gladness coursed his veins to learn that his friend's life had been spared, for Goodrich cherished a warm regard for Jim Darling. And again the news brought a certain sense of disappointment to the protector of Virginia Bainbridge. It marked the bursting of a bubble, the tumbling of castles built of air.

Virginia Bainbridge had brought forth the long-submerged qualities of love and charity from Bill Goodrich's soul. Hers was the influence of a good, pure woman on a rough and reckless man. Goodrich's one ambition, now, was to see his beautiful charge safely out of the den of Salazar. And, in truth, the skipper's daughter had won his heart. With the shyness of a maiden, Bill Goodrich regarded his growing interest in Virginia. Not until confronted by the possibility of losing her to Darling would he admit the truth—that secretly he loved her. It was one of the strange paradoxes of the heart, that a rough, uncouth man like Goodrich should cherish so tender a passion for a girl so unversed in the ways and woes of the world.

Anxiously Bill waited until his companions should be asleep so he could slip to Virginia's hiding-place and apprise her of what he had learned. He had to wait long, for Salazar, perturbed by the tidings of the day, paced the cave until far past midnight, muttering savagely to himself. At length, however, he repaired to his private chamber. Bill, who slept in one of the larger caverns of the cave with the other members of the band, arose, and stepping carefully among the slumbering forms, groped his way into the main corridor.

In a few minutes more he had scaled the wall and wriggled his form thru the aperture into the grotto where the girl was hidden. He carried his usual amount of food—scant at the best—and a jug of water. Virginia was waiting his coming.

"Oh, I thought you would never come!" she whispered. "Isn't it much past the hour you generally come?"

"Yes, miss," replied Bill, "but I have been delayed tonight. There has been big goings on. I have news for you."

"A way to escape? Oh, tell me it is true!" cried Virginia.

"Well, not exactly that," replied Bill, "but something you'll be almost as glad to learn. Jim Darling is safe for sure! Had the word direct from Nome by wireless today."

Bill had decided beforehand that he would not tell her of Jim's arrest. For the present it would be best for her to believe him out of all trouble. And in fact, Bill, in his generous desire to see the girl's spirits improved, carried the tale just a bit further.

"Alive and well?" repeated Virginia, unbelievingly.

"Yes, that and more," assured Goodrich. "In Nome he is going to put the officials wise, get a ship, and come down here and take me away from this place. And that, of course, means you, too, miss. It will be some surprise, for he won't be looking for you here."

"When is he coming? Oh, I know I cannot live in this dreadful dark hole much longer!"

"Now, patience, miss," calmed Goodrich. "Just when he intends coming I hardly could tell. You see, it is rather up in the air, as regards details and everything."

"But you are sure he is coming, coming to take me away from here?"

A poignant sensation of guilt gripped the big heart of Bill Goodrich. What right had he to raise so high the hopes of this little girl on so slender and unstable a ladder of probability? She trusted too implicitly in what he told her! Believed his every word! Her faith was a beautiful thing. It was a new experience in the life of Bill Goodrich. It carried him back over the years of his boyhood days when he knelt and said his prayers at his mother's knee. Bill Goodrich's lips quivered and he felt a strange, alien moisture in his eyes.

"Miss Virginy," he gulped, "I am sure he's coming. Just as sure as I'm talking here to you. And if there's any trouble you can count on old Bill. Why, Miss Virginy, I don't know as I have any rights telling you this, but I'd lay down my life this very minute, and that right willingly, too, before I'd see a hair on your little head come to harm."

"I know you would, Mr. Goodrich," the girl replied, deeply stirred by Bill's avowal.

She reached her slender hand out in the darkness, sought Goodrich's calloused and mammoth paw, and bestowed upon it a sympathetic pressure. The touch thrilled him.

"Guess I'd better be going, miss," said Bill, at length, thankful for the darkness which cloaked his embarrassment. "Can't stay away too long. Some one might wake up. I'll be back tomorrow night."

"Good-by," sighed the girl, and resigned herself to another twenty-four hours of silent loneliness.

This capital story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

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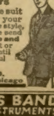

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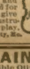

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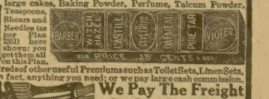

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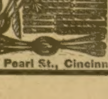

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CHAPTER VI.

THE moon was well westward and a fine fog hung over the flats and bottoms. Some one was walking steadily up the trail that led over the shoulder of Cereza Loma peak to the mesa where the Los Coyotes dwelt in abject apathy.

The sleeve of a white shirtwaist dangled from a little pack slung over her shoulder. Her hair hung down her back. A screech owl doing sentry duty from a tall dead pine screamed a horrid alarum. A coyote scuttled back from the trail where he had been verifying the scent of a smart dog that had chased him that day, but she kept on up the trail.

Royse, alone, was suddenly rejoined by his purple flibbertigibbet.

"Good heavens, the thing's growing!" was his first thought.

"Hello, old kid!" said the cat, familiarly. "How's the Blue Ruin?"

"As well as could be hoped," said Ned, politely. "Aren't you growing? Don't mean to be personal, but——"

"Yes, I have grown some—it's the climate. But do you notice what a nice color I am by moonlight?"

"Sort of a mouse color——"

"I am insulted, sir, it is puce. By the way, did you ever try drinking hair tonic?"

"No—why?"

"Contains a large percentage of the old stuff," and the monster leered pitilessly.

"Shut up!"

"And it's possible to get drunk on coal oil, tho I can't say I'd fancy it myself. Better try the hair tonic."

Royse cursed feebly. Then he stumbled off toward the village barber shop.

* * * * *

"Buenos dias, Salida."

The girl glanced up from the berries she was capping to see her indolent young cousin slouching in the doorway of her adobe. She replied in the patois of Indian and Spanish he preferred to use.

"What is it, Juan?"

"The money from la chiquita Patron." He handed her four silver dollars. "You will loan me one?"

"And you will lose it playing peon again," she accused. "Yes, here—take it."

"Maybe I win, Salida—I am very lucky."

"Maybe not," she replied impatiently. "What news? What did la chiquita Patron say?"

Juan, a magnificent exemplar of idleness, carelessly twisted a cigarette before answering. All that morning, the second after her desertion from Campos, her thoughts had been of the young man whose smile had been so friendly, whose words had cheered her somehow, altho they condemned her to what she sought escape from—he had said he would be her friend.

"She say nothing," Juan said between puffs, "except you are a fool to quit working. I think so, too."

Salida restrained an impulse to slap her cousin's face. She wished information.

"The old man who whittles—did you see him?"

"Mack Donald was talking with the agent. He said the old man had gone to look for gold—chifladura!" Juan tapped his forehead significantly.

"Mack Donald laughed at him because he is old and like a child. He took with him a lame burro—Mack Donald said he would soon come back. When I am older than he is I shall not be such a fool."

"Was—was there any one else about the hotel?"

She must be careful, for Juan was very suspicious and evil-minded.

"The man who runs the stage and Jose from Rancho Los Amigos—and a truck driver—that is all."

"Oh!" she said in disappointment.

"Is there anything more you want to know?" Juan queried, with studied insolence.

"No, Juan," she replied; then called after him, "Is my aunt at home?"

"How do I know!" was the retort. "I suppose yes. When I left she was. She is stiff and cannot move."

Juan climbed on his horse and galloped away.

The young man had gone with the old man—or else he had gone where he could get whisky.

"No, I don't believe that," she said slowly aloud.

She had a feeling he would conquer himself—even her inexperienced eyes told her a mouth and chin like his betokened a strength sufficient to overcome any weakness if called into play. The old man's words came to her.

"We air a-goin' to find the ole Peg-Leg, sure.'

They made her vaguely uneasy. Despair had gripped her heart since her return. She found the sun-baked house of mud as she had left it, practically as it was when old Quintiliano died there.

Things did not change on the reservation. At least they changed slowly, almost imperceptibly. Cataclysms in the lives of her people were unknown. They seemed as immutable as the grim masses of rock tumbled about on the edge of the plateau, wearing only with long erosion. Friction was a negligible factor. They drifted in the channel of least resistance. For all their impractical life they were quite prosaic. Salida did not know it, but in comparison she was sentimental. Hers was a spirit that three centuries ago made the Los Coyotes the most powerful tribe in the Southwest.

Life had not seemed very good these two days. She had barely enough interest in prolonging it to send Juan for supplies and to gather a few berries in the brush-choked arroyo that cut thru her place.

A moment she gazed thru the open doorway. A horned toad sat blinking in the sun. The cuffs of her white shirtwaist were soiled, and she turned them back. She saw apathetically, as she started for her aunt's, that the front of her dress was stained with berries.

Salida found her aunt, upon whom at birth some wag of a priest had bestowed the name of Nectarina, grunting over a metate in which she was crushing acorns. Nectarina was old but sound, save for a recent injury to her hip.

"Well, you are a fool, Sobrina Salida," she said, ignoring the girl's greeting. "What are you going to do in your house alone? You will go crazy."

Salida watched her aunt silently—she was not concerned about her future. Again that feeling of uneasiness about the young man—he was soft and could not long endure without water.

"He said he would be my friend," she thought. "Perhaps he shall have some need of my friendship."

"Sobrina Salida," the old woman broke in on her musing, "why do you not marry?"

"Tia Nectarina, whom should I marry?" she asked dully, and then it seemed a voice within her answered, "Marry him."

No, she must not think such things——

"That is easy." Her aunt regarded her curiously. "There is Juan——"

"He is my cousin."

Her aunt's lean shoulders expressed contempt for this evasion.

"What of it? I do not care, tho. There is Manuel—he is a fine vaquero."

"You can marry him—you are a woman—you can marry him if you will, and have him smile at you always," said the disturbing inner voice again.

"I do not like Manuel," she said firmly.

"You are hard to please."

"Yes, I am, but—but I have thought of getting married, only I do not know whom."

"Juan was right—you are a fool."

Nectarina belonged to the old regime. She was one of the few now who knew the old songs. Indeed, so steeped was she in lore, and so impatient of all modernism, that she was regarded with some disfavor by the priest who came to say mass in the little adobe chapel on the reservation.

Nothing pleased her more than talking of the old times. Often as a child Salida had listened to these tales for hours. She thought of a story—it seemed a legend—that had to do with marriage and in some way a journey on the desert. It was one of the first stories her old grandfather had told her—she had never heard her aunt mention it. Now her mind somehow connected her faint impressions of this story with that of the lost and almost fabulous Peg-Leg mine.

"Once Quintiliano told me how to make certain of happiness in marriage," she said cautiously, adding a touch of subtle flattery. "You know all his tales—surely you know this one of the desert."

"La Desierto—did he tell you that?" demanded Nectarina. Salida nodded.

"Come out in the sun," said the old woman, abruptly but more kindly.

She hobbled to a bench covered with coyote skins and filled a corncob pipe—she could no longer roll cigarettes. Salida brought a match and lighted the pipe.

"There is a trail of happiness," began Tia Nectarina, letting the blue smoke curl from her nostrils. "But you could not go—you are too civilized. They who go must be strong and hard. Today they do not care. They marry like they would play peon—maybe they are lucky, maybe not.

"I know this trail, but none others after me. If you do what is required you shall surely be happy. I have been happy. It must be done in the time of the full moon."

Salida listened eagerly.

"One day before you must fast," the old woman droned. Salida was glad she had not cared for breakfast. "You will follow the trail that leads to the edge of the desert. When you come to the road that leads toward San Pasquel, you turn to the right. There is La Desierto. There is a water hole. It is near Coyote Wells.

"When I went my father gave me an

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olla filled with oil. It was a small olla. The oil was very sweet and good to smell of. It was made by an old man from herbs and the fat of the sacred coyotes.

"My father and my mother went with me to the edge of this water. The father and mother of the man I wanted to marry, who was your uncle—they went with me here, too. The men sang those songs of love you have heard me sing at fiestas. My mother and his mother wept. He was in Campos very drunk.

"When the face of the moon was seen my mother undressed me and rubbed the oil upon the soles of my feet. It was very cool and pleasant. Then she rubbed it all over me to the edge of my hair. She walked with me to a rock and pointed the way to me.

"Many miles away I could see a black hill. She told me to walk straight until I came to that. 'Go around the north side and follow an arroyo that goes toward the northeast,' she told me. There she said I would find a large white rock, broken in many pieces.

"I stood on this and three times turned around. Then I looked to the east as she said. At the edge of the sky I saw a hill shaped like a woman's breast. I went toward that until the sun was gone.

"There was no rest, no sleep, until I came to a pile of black rock. In the center of this are three hills of gold, beloved by the sun. That night I killed a snake with my bare hands. Then I slept a little. At the first light I burned the snake on a pile of brush. It was la bovora—it had seven rattles. The sun came—I—I became the bride of the sun. Oh, why should I tell you—you are too civilized. You cannot understand."

Old Nectarina sought by this gruffness to cover her emotion. The girl saw her aunt's wrinkled lips tremble and put her arm around her.

"You say I am too civilized," she said gently. "I do not fear to die if it will make me happy. Is there on the reservation any of this oil?"

"No, there has been none made for fifteen years—maybe twenty."

"Quintilliano said that a white man once went there," prompted the girl.

"He learned the place from the woman he married," Nectarina replied harshly. "She was of this tribe. I knew her. One day she died—strangled with a riata of coyote hide as she walked along the trail to Campos. Those who tell die that way. The man lived, but he never found it again. His burros died strangely. His water bags leaked—everything went wrong with him. I do not fear you will tell. You are a Los Coyote. You have the right to know, but you are too civilized just the same."

"It was always the women who went over this trail?"

"Yes—always it is the women who do—the hard things."

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was nothing effete in the way Salida took to the trail which, avoiding Campos, led by the most direct line to the neighborhood of Coyote Wells. She was trotting steadily, gauging the time with an anxious eye on the moon.

She had gone home from her aunt's at sundown. Instead of preparing supper she sat staring vacantly into the dusk. Then suddenly she had seen him. It was like a picture—or a mirage on the desert. He was alone and he walked with the feverish aimlessness of one who is lost.

"His lips were black," she repeated, as she thought of it now, "his lips were black."

Unconsciously she quickened her pace until she grew short of breath. One little hand clutched a gayly labeled bottle of olive oil, the other pressed to the "stitch" in her side.

"Tia Nectarina is right—I—am—too civilized," she gasped. Only a moment and she was on again. Several times a little thrill, half delight, half torment, raced up and down her back. She had a weird prescient thought that he was calling her. She passed two ranches where the trail merged for a mile in the road. Dogs had barked at her.

She uttered a funny little prayer to the moon to keep her from tiring. She trotted easier now. Her chin was up and she breathed thru her nostrils.

From the brow of a hill she saw the desert brooding under a mist of moonlight. She exulted in a feeling of well-being. There was no longer a question in her mind of what she was doing, or why. On and on until she came to the little water hole Tia Nectarina had described. On both sides and behind the mountains crouched like sleeping behemoths. Before, was La Desierto.

Salida had no need of Laertes' precept to Ophelia: "The chariest maid is prodigal enough if she unmask her beauty to the moon."

A moment she hesitated, then stepped into the shade of a clump of manzanita. Quickly she disrobed, but even in her haste carefully folded the waist and skirt.

She did the things in a bundle and pushed them in the thicket where the dew would not wet them. A moment she stood letting the tepid night air caress her body. Salida could have been the leading lady in any revue.

One brief thought of turning back—she felt momentary shame for her apostasy from civilization and the superstitious faith that impelled her to follow the letter of the old tradition. The thought of her vision decided her.

She drew the cork from the bottle with her small white teeth. She rubbed a little on her arm and then on her breasts. Utterly free of self-consciousness she went thru this ceremony of the unguent.

"If only I had some of that coyote oil," she regretted aloud, "I think it would have been better, but this will have to do."

For any feeling of embarrassment she might have laid modesty aside with her garments. As she stepped into the light, her arms above her head, the palms of her hands upward as if in supplication to Venus, her delicate body shone like a fine old bronze.

How many young forms had glistened there in the moonlight—the fairest flowers of the old tribe—and stepped forth bravely from yearning eyes behind—and were never seen more!

Scrambling agilely to a foothold on a huge bowlder, she looked about, blessing the exactitude with which Indians direct one another by natural objects—yes, there was the black hill. And here was a picture— but she had no thought of posing. She was off into the desert and the night.

"I am going the old trail," she exulted, "in the old way."

CHAPTER VIII.

"BUDDY, I reckon I can't go on this mornin'." The old man spoke feebly from his blankets as Royse approached with a pannikin of black coffee.

"Why, what's the matter, Old Timer?" asked Royse, anxiously.

"I ain't as strong as I figgered I was, that's all."

"Here," Ned gave him the coffee, "this'll brace you—you'll be all right when we get started."

Old Ike propped himself weakly on one elbow.

"'Tain't no use for me to try and fool myself, Buddy—I'm licked for this trip."

Despair clutched Ned's heart for a moment—the lame burro and his mate were gone. They had broken tether during the night and set out for water, no doubt dissatisfied, as well they might have been, with the scanty allowance doled out. He made the discouraging discovery before the old man awoke.

"How air ye feelin'?" the old man asked.

"Oh, I'm all right." How could he tell him?

Unaccustomed to walking, especially in the blazing heat, the young man was stiffened and footsore. The craving for alcohol was gone, but in its stead was a terrible thirst for water which the little measured out regularly by the old man had merely aggravated rather than alleviated.

Already the cool of the night had vanished, and the sun's first rays foreshadowed in unrelenting intensity the heat of the day.

"She's a-goin' to be a scorcher, Buddy—I reckon we'll have to be a startin' back. We can't be far from the ole Peg-Leg, the—feel it in my bones. Must be 'round here somewhar. How much water did ye use for breakfast?"

"Quite a little," admitted Royse, remorsefully. Unable longer to support that gnawing thirst, he had drank deeply.

"Wal, how much is thar?"

"One bag's full and another over half full."

"H—l, Buddy, we'll be lucky if we get back alive—I was an ole fool to ever start out this late in the year—too nigh summer. Wish them burros was camels——"

The old man lay back.

"We'll have to cache everything we can spare here, and ye'll have to get me on one of them beasts——"

"The burros are gone, Old Timer," he said gently. "Ran away in the night."

A look of profound indignation came to the old man's face.

"Both of 'em? Why—why, the d—d ongrateful brutes, after me givin' 'em all that water to drink last night! Tan their hides—oughter be shot, both of 'em! Why, d—n it——"

Anger deprived him of speech.

"It's hard luck all right," said Royse, "but we'll manage somehow. I think I can carry you—we can't be so far from water."

Old Ike snorted.

"Ye'll be lucky to carry yereself. Close to water! Close to h—l! We been a-ramblin' two days, and we're forty miles, if we're a foot, from the nearest damp spot. Why, ole Peg-Leg would say this were a bad fix—to think of them colts of the devil—wal, we must make the best of it, I reckon. Ye do as I tell ye, and ye'll make it. If ye don't, ye won't! Trail them imps of Satan if ye can—they'll go the shortest way——"

"But how about you?" Royse ventured.

"Never you mind about me—I'm a-figgerin' me in on this, too—ye just do what I tell ye. Get track of them beasts, if ye can, and stick to it. If ye lose it don't get excited and go chasin' yere tail around in a circle.

"Just go slow and keep yere eye on Eagle peak—it's sixty miles away, but ye can't miss it—it's higher'n any of 'em. If I only had them burros now—can't get over thinkin' 'bout that low-down trick——"

"Perhaps we didn't give them water enough?"

"Gave 'em more'n they deserved—burros can do without it six times as long as a man."

A desert prospector is convinced burros have a tank concealed somewhere within them, and furthermore, he expects these animals to lick dew from the vegetation, such as it is. He will tell you, also, that the beasts possess esoteric information as to what varieties of cactus contain refreshing moisture.

"Wal, thar's just one thing, and that's for ye to start out—don't try to go too fast. And for God's sake be keerful of yere water—don't drink too much to once't it's better to take small drinks oftener.

"Keep yere head, Buddy, and don't give up. One time I found the skeleton of a feller and his hoss not over two hundred yards from water. Had a pardner once't who died out here—him and me parted and he came out alone.

"Wal, sir, he must 'a' got lost, but we found what was left of him not more'n a good cattle trail to water. Art was a funny feller——

"I mind once't they had him up in court at Balina for shootin' somebody or other, and ole Sam Gaskell, who was actin' as the court, says, says he, 'Art, on yere oath now, just how many fellers have ye shot?' 'Count Mexicans?' Art asked him, and old Sam says, 'Yep, Mexicans and all, Art—how many?' And then Art says, puzzled-like, 'Wal, in that case I don't know.'

"Remember what I tole ye, now—'tain't hard to get lost if ye don't keep yere eye on sumthin'. Better batch up some flapjacks and fry some of that bacon afore ye start—ye can leave the canned goods for me."

An hour later Royse was ready. He had cut a supply of firewood from the brush and prepared food enough for both. He arranged the old man comfortably on the blankets in what shade a clump of greasewood afforded.

"I don't feel just right, leaving you here, Old Timer,' he said.

"I ain't a gone goat yet, nohow, Buddy," replied the old man cheerfully. "I'll be all right—snug as a bug in a rug. This here ole Colt of mine is purty old, but she'll shoot straight yet."

"But what if I should not make it?"

"Wal, then, I don't want no better place to die, but ye'll make it. If ye keep on steady ye oughter make it by tomorrow morning. Go to the Hacienda Los Amigos—that's the nearest ranch—and tell 'em whar I am. Reckon I'm cured of the gold fever, Buddy—no more prospectin' for me."

"Good-by, Old Timer." Royse gripped

(Continued on Page 14.)

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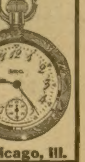


Proving It.

"Johnny, don't you know it's wrong for a little boy to fight?"

"Yes'm. But Willie doesn't know it, and I'm proving it to him."

Her Own Fault.

Mistress—"Mary, don't let me catch you kissing the grocer's boy again."

Mary—"Lor, mum, I don't mean to, but you do bob around so."

THE PELICAN'S PICNIC

No Wonder.

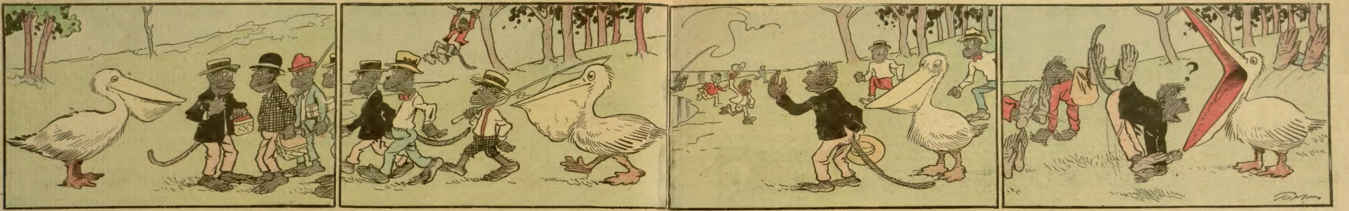
"That story about me was deliberately cooked up."

"Tnen I don't blame you for getting in a stew."

Had His Preferences.

Jinks—"He refused a commission to make a portrait of the talkative little lady."

Blinks—"He paints still life only.

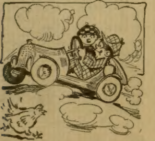


Jocko—"Say, fellers, Pelican says if we'll let him go on our picnic he'll carry the lunch all the way for us. Shall we let him go?"
Everybody—"Yes."

"Well, it's been a long tramp, but here we are, at the fishing hole at last. Now we'll see who's the best fisherman in the bunch.

"Hey! Everybody that's hungry, come on in. We're going to tap the lunch. Open up, Pelican.

"Wow! He's swallowed it all—the low-down thief!"



"Then you are not going to buy a car?"

"Why should I buy a car? Enough salesmen are after me to keep me supplied with rides all the coming summer."

Wanted Help.

As the motorist turned a corner in a quiet country road he saw a brother of the wheel just ahead, evidently in trouble. Immediately he slowed down.

"Want any help?" he asked genially.

The other motorist looked gratefully at him as he wiped the perspiration off his brow.

"I do," he whispered. "See that lady in the car? She's my wife, and I'd be much obliged if you'd answer her questions and keep her amused while I'm seeing to this burst tire."

Tough Flour.

"I just stopped to tell you about that flour you sent me the other day," said Mrs. Newlywed.

"Why, madam," answered the grocer, "that was the best flour I carry in stock. What was the matter with it?"

"Matter, indeed! Why, it was so tough my husband couldn't eat the biscuits I made with it."

Beyond Endurance.

Actors have, as a rule, a wonderful store of stories upon which to draw, but they are by no means all so funny as that told by Mr. Walter Passmore concerning a certain fat actor who was invariably short of breath.

The poor fellow was certainly a bad actor, but he did his best thruout the play, and it was more his misfortune than his fault that the best he could do was so exceedingly poor that the audience never ceased from "guying" him.

When, in the last scene of all, the unhappy Thespian was supposed to be shot, he probably thought that in simulated death he would enjoy temporary peace; but it was not to be, for even when lying dead on the ground his panting was only too visible to the audience, one member of whom in the gallery shouted to a friend on the other side of the house: "I say, Bill, look how his bellows blows!"—a remark that flesh and blood could not endure unnoticed.

Gathering himself together, and with a look of intensely injured dignity, the corpse sat up and with concentrated bitterness replied: "Respect the dead."

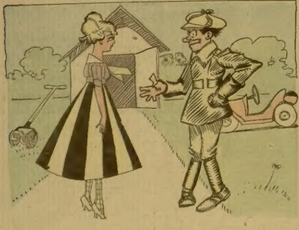
Couldn't Afford to Lose Him.

Passing thru an old-fashioned town, a cyclist heard a woman scream and then the muffled tones of a man's voice. He dismounted and went in the direction whence the sounds came. There he saw a buxom woman holding the handle of the cottage door with all her might, while it was evident that some one inside was trying to force it open.

"Give me a hand, mister," the woman called. "I mustn't let him out."

"What is the matter?" asked the cyclist, as he assisted the woman in her strenuous endeavor.

"It's my husband," was the response. "He's got one of his crazy fits on today. For Heaven's sake, don't let him out till this policeman has passed. You see, Bill's nasty with policemen, and this one is worth too much to lose. I does his washin'."



Woman (to new chauffeur)—"Do you know how to run a lawn mower?"

Chauffeur—"No, ma'am, I don't. My eddikation has been limited to cars, biplanes and submarines."

Diplomatic.

Mrs. Aytoun wanted new shoes, so she went into a shop, where an obliging assistant brought out a selection for her to try on.

"That's strange, madam," said he, after many vain attempts to fit her. "One of your feet is larger than the other."

Bristling with rage, the lady left the shop and sought another. Here again, the assistant failed to find a pair which would do.

"How curious, madam!" he said. "One of your feet is smaller than the other."

And, with a beaming smile, Mrs. Aytoun bought two pairs.

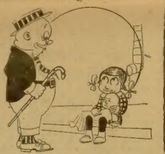
A Quick Answer.

While we have human nature we shall have askers of silly questions. One of these was worrying a woman tram conductor recently until even her urbanity suffered overwork.

"And what do you do," he asked with a leer, "if one of your passengers were forward enough to chuck you under your pretty chin?"

With lightning quickness came the reply:

"I'd chuck him under the pretty tram!"



"How old is your baby brother, little girl?"

"He's a this year's model."

His Star.

Long had he worshiped her at a distance, but his shyness prevented him from proposing.

Then, one evening, for the sweet sake of charity, a theatrical performance, took place, in which the charmer was leading lady and more adorable than ever. Afterward the shy admirer drew near, his love made valliant by the sight of her beauty.

"You are the star of the evening," he said, as they stood alone in a corner.

"You are the first to tell me so," said the damsel, with a happy blush.

"Then," he retorted promptly, "may I claim my reward as an astronomer?"

The lady looked puzzled.

"What reward?" she asked.

"Why, the right to give my name to the star I have discovered!" said the young man, speaking boldly at last.

He Lived on Fruit.

A lazy dyspeptic was bewailing his own misfortunes and speaking with a friend on the latter's hearty appearance.

"What do you do to make yourself so strong and healthy?" inquired the dyspeptic.

"Live on fruit alone."

"What kind of fruit?"

"The fruit of industry; and I am never troubled with indigestion."

Usually.

Harry Lehr, the New York society leader, said in a discussion of the divorce evil:

"A girl of 17 once asked a grass widow:

"'When a man makes love to a girl, is it a sign he wants to marry her?'

"'Yes, my child,' the grass widow answered grimly, 'and when he stops making love to her, it is usually a sign that the marriage has taken place.'"

Mysterious.

First Flapper—"I can't imagine how that secret leaked out."

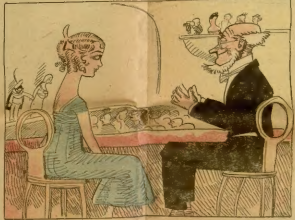
Second Ditto—"Nor I! I am sure every one I told promised to say nothing about it."

Artistic Work.

Mrs. Grumbell entered the taxidermist's with a stuffed parrot in her hands.

"Do you remember the bird you stuffed for me for Christmas?" she asked. "Well, the work was so badly done that the feathers are simply falling out."

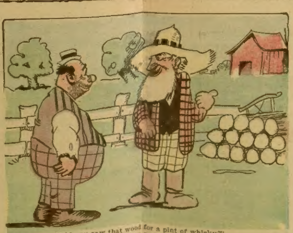
"Ah, madam," said the man, "that is a triumph of art. We stuff our birds so well that they molt at the proper season."



Rich Lumberman (at the opera)—"By jinks, Mame, that's music, such as I calls music!"

City Niece—"I hardly thought you would appreciate it, uncle!"

Lumberman—"Why, by jinks, Mame, it sounds jest like my three sawmills on Beaver Creek all runnin' at once!"



Farmer—"Would you saw that wood for a pint of whisky?"

Tramp—"If de whisky's old, de saw new and de wood as dry as I am, I will!"

The Great Need.

The Sunday school teacher was talking to her pupils on patience. She explained her topic carefully, and as an aid to understanding she gave each pupil a card bearing the picture of a boy fishing.

"Even pleasure," she said, "requires the exercise of patience. See the boy fishing; he must sit and wait and wait. He must be patient."

Having treated the subject very fully, she began with the simplest, most practical question:

"And now can any little boy tell me what we need most when we go fishing?"

The answer was quickly shouted with one voice: "Bait!"

Lucky to the Last.

Rook—"Taylor was always a fortunate man, but doesn't it seem wonderful that his luck should stay with him to the very last?"

Raleigh—"How was that?"

Rook—"Why, he was operated on for the removal of a pearl which he had accidentally swallowed while eating oysters, and when the pearl was examined it was found to be valuable enough to pay for both the operation and the funeral."

"War is hell, you know."

"It used to be, but hell has improved some since."

Wanted Them Bad.

A provision house, which prides itself on filling orders accurately, received a letter from a provincial customer recently, complaining bitterly that the last order of eggs supplied had been very poor.

The reputation of the house for never making an error seemed to be at stake, but the bright mind of the junior partner found a way out of it. He wrote:

"Gentlemen: We are sorry to hear that our consignment did not suit you; there was, however, no mistake on our part. We have looked up your original order and find it reads as follows: 'Rush fifty boxes of eggs. We want them bad!'"

The Stolen Kiss.

"I hear that Florrie has broken off her engagement with you, old chap," said one man to another.

"Yes," replied the second.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry to hear it. Whatever did she do it for?"

"Just because I stole a kiss," said the disconsolate one, sadly.

"Great Scot," exclaimed his friend. "Surely she must be crazy if she objects to her fiance's stealing a kiss from her."

The abandoned one sighed deeply.

"But that's just the trouble," he said "I didn't steal it from her!"

Changing the Subject.

"It is always merely polite to change the conversation after any unpleasant remarks," explained father, kindly, as the family sat round the breakfast table.

That evening he returned home to find that several of his pet flower beds had been raided, while tiny footprints pointed to the culprit.

"Mabel," he said sternly to his 6-year-old daughter, "did you pick my flowers?"

"Oh, daddy, was there a monkey in the city today?" came the prompt reply. "We had a——"

"Never mind that! Did you pick my flowers?"

"The Tickle baby next door has got another tooth," announced Mabel, politely.

"Mabel, now I want the truth! Did you pick my flowers?"

"Yes, daddy, I did!" sighed Mabel resignedly. "But I thought I would change the subject."

His Ultimatum.

"Excavation work here's gettin' along very slowly," grumbled the foreman to Larry, as he stood on the edge of the foundation and looked down into the pit. "I'll have to send another man along to lend you a hand."

Left to himself, Larry speculated upon what sort of chap would be sent to assist him, and devoutly hoped he would not be one of those fellows who always wanted to get a job done.

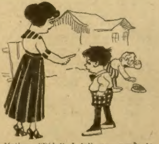
Suddenly he glanced up and met the pugnacious stare of the foreman's bulldog looking over the edge of the pit.

"Begorra!" he roared, as his pipe fell. "Oi've worked with Oitalions, Ger-rmans and niggars, but if a man wid a face loike that comes to work down here beside me Oi gets up!"

Funny.

Church—"In nearly all of the cities in Chile women are employed as street car conductors."

Gotham—"It must look funny to see a conductor out there get off her car backward."



Mother—"Didn't I tell you never to hit a little boy when you can use a soft answer to turn wrath away?"

Little Boy—"Well, I didn't have any soft answer, so I gave him a soft slap."

On the Bill of Fare.

A woodman coming into the city of Vancouver, B. C., walked into a restaurant and inspected the bill of fare. A smile passed over his face. After a slight pause he said: "Bring me some fly specks."

"Sir?" said the waiter haughtily.

"Haven't you got fly specks?" inquired the man.

"No, sir," returned the waiter still more haughtily.

"Then," quoth the woodman, "take them off the bill of fare."

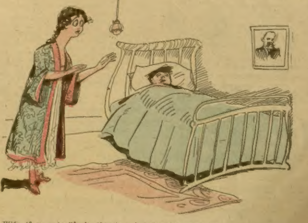
Putting On the Stamp.

Merchant—"Did you post my letter as I told you, John?"

John—"Yes, sir; but I had it weighed first, and as it was double weight I put another stamp on it."

Merchant—"That's right. Only I hope you didn't put the extra stamp on so that it would obliterate the address."

John—"Indeed, I didn't, sir. I just stuck it on top of the other stamp so as to save room."



Wife (2 a. m.)—"Jack, there's a burglar downstairs!"

Young Lawyer—"Lemme sleep!"

Wife—"Jack, don't be so shiftless! He may have money, perhaps!"

In the Lion's Mouth

By Will Lisenbee

THE shabby figures of the two men left the road, descended a gentle slope to the margin of the stream that tinkled beneath a rustic bridge, and having slaked their thirst, they threw themselves upon the green bank.

"Fuzzy" Jenks was about 40, his companion some ten years younger. Fuzzy leaned his back against a bowlder which was sumptuously upholstered with moss as soft and caressing as a Persian rug. He drew a sigh of deepest satisfaction.

"We will say that the road to Vagabondia ends right here," he said, letting his gaze wander to the imposing mansion on the hill, "and if fortune hain't stacked the cards on us, we'll have a change of raiment, a bath and a square meal."

"I am hungry this blessed minute!" interposed the younger man, who went by the name of Reddy.

"And you shall be fed," assured Fuzzy. "Having lived for a month on your bounty, it is my time to provide refreshments and such other necessaries as we may require. As I told you when we first hit the road together, I have a friend who will provide me with sufficient funds to put me on my feet again, and he lives in the mansion on the hill yonder. He's a great sport, and no doubt will come across handsomely—that is, if what I have heard of him is true."

"Why, I thought you said he was a friend of yours," said Reddy.

"Well, he is, but he hasn't found it out yet," laughed Fuzzy. "When I rest a little and have had time to make a suitable toilet, I am going to call on him and advise him of the intimate relations existing between. It is one of the ties that bind."

"I wish you success," said Reddy, abstractedly.

"Thanks, pardner; I am glad to have your moral support in my project. I have never been much of a success at anything so far, but it's a long trail that has no turn. I have tried working—a little—and have loafed, tramped, piloted cows across the range, and taken a hand at poker; I have even tried legitimate business, but this is the first time I have had a chance to work on the benevolent impulses of an involuntary friend. If I make it work I shall take a little holiday, get the callousness off my feet, and then take my place in society."

As Fuzzy was speaking, he was studying, with half-closed eyes, the architectural beauty of the mansion on the hill, and making a mental estimate of what one must be worth in order to maintain so sumptuous a place of abode. As he was thus occupied, he caught a fleeting glimpse of a big touring car, which suddenly poked its nose over the hill and turned into the spacious grounds that surrounded the mansion.

"The man in that car," mused Fuzzy, "is doubtless the young master of the place—Benjamin Darlington, the lucky sport who has inherited all that wad of wealth without having to shed a tear for his departed benefactor. And now I am to call on him and try and find out where I come in."

And Fuzzy was quite correct in his supposition that the man in the car was Benjamin Darlington, and he was equally correct in surmising that the arrogant young sport had come into possession of this splendid heritage without having the fountains of his grief disturbed.

Darlington was not over 30. He was faultlessly clad, and there was that about his thin lips and deep gray eyes that betokened physical courage and a touch of arrogance. He stepped from the car with a quick, nervous stride, and entering the house, went directly to the library, where he seated himself at a richly carved mahogany table, and began to examine some papers which he drew from a drawer.

He was still occupied with the papers an hour later, when a servant entered and announced that a stranger had presented himself at the door and had asked to see Mr. Darlington.

"What does he look like?" asked Darlington.

"A bit like a tramp, sir," replied the servant, "but he says he must see you."

"Tell him to be off. I have no time to be bothered with beggars."

The servant turned, hesitated, and then said: "If you please, sir, he said I might say to you that he is a friend of—I think he said Sam Dover."

The face of Darlington changed color just a trifle. "You are sure he said Sam Dover?"

"Yes, sir, quite sure."

Darlington was silent for a moment. "Well, you may as well show him in here," he said at length.

The servant withdrew, and a few moments later ushered Fuzzy Jenks into the library.

"My name's Jenks—Joshua Jenks," said Fuzzy, "a name that doesn't mean anything to you, Mr. Darlington, only so far as it has been associated with that of Sam Dover in the bonds of friendship."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Jenks," said Darlington, extending his hand. "You are quite right in coming. I am always glad to meet a friend of Mr. Dover's."

He pushed a chair to his visitor, and Fuzzy sank into it with a grateful sigh. Fuzzy thought that it was good to feel the hospitable caress of an easy chair once more.

"Of course I have an object in calling on you, Mr. Darlington," said Fuzzy, "aside from my desire to meet a very dear friend of my friend Dover."

"If I can serve you in any way I shall be glad to do so," said Darlington. "I have heard nothing from Dover for two or three months. He was in San Antonio at that time. His health was not good, but I hope it has improved."

"He is dead," said Fuzzy. "He died about six weeks ago."

"Dead!" echoed Darlington, in a dazed sort of way. "That is sad news, indeed!"

"His death was a shock to me," said Fuzzy. "We were, you might say, like brothers. We were boys together, school mates and always the closest of friends."

"Were you with him when he died?"

"Yes. I think he knew the end was coming, but I could not think so, for he seemed to be improving. I helped him settle up his affairs, and was with him to the last. He had no living relatives, as you may know, and he put all his affairs in my hands. Sam Dover had no property to speak of, and he told me that his only resources were derived from a certain fund in your hands, the income from which you sent to him at certain intervals."

Darlington was silent for a moment. "Yes, I sent him remittances at intervals," he said at length, "but such were in the form of a pension, and not derived from any fund in my hands. It is evident that you misunderstood him."

"That doesn't seem likely at all," said Fuzzy. "Mr. Dover was quite clear in his statements, and I talked all his affairs over with him."

"Oh, well, it can hardly matter what your impressions about the matter were," interposed Darlington. "This is something that concerned only Mr. Dover and myself."

Fuzzy smiled placidly. "You are quite right in a sense," he said, "so long as you and Mr. Dover had the matter between you. But that is not the case at present. Sam Dover made a will, and in his will he bequeathed all his estate, real and personal, to me, and among the items listed was certain property in your possession, for which you paid to Mr. Dover two hundred and fifty dollars per month, according to contract."

"It's all moonshine!" said Darlington, with a wave of his hand, as if he would brush the matter aside. "Moonshine pure and simple. Why, bless your soul, Dover was as poor as a tinker, and never had a dollar ahead while he was in my employ. The money I sent him was a gift—a pension, I might say, which I allowed him out of gratitude, for he saved my life once at the risk of his own. That is the truth of the matter, and I am real sorry that Mr. Dover should have had the illusion you speak of, and that you should be disappointed in your expectations. It is not unusual for persons to have such illusions as Mr. Dover appears to have had when ill, as he was at the time."

"Then you deny having anything of value in your possession which belonged to Sam Dover?" asked Fuzzy.

"Certainly. I never had a dollar's worth of his property in my life."

"Then I am not to receive anything at all from you by the will of Sam Dover?"

"Not a cent," declared Darlington. "It is unfortunate that you should have been misinformed, but that is no fault of mine."

"It is a little unfortunate," admitted Fuzzy. "I hate to learn that Sam Dover's income was only an illusion, especially as Sam wasn't the kind to have illusions. And since I come to think about it, maybe I got Sam's statement a little mixed. It might be that, instead of having placed property of his in your hands, he had merely rendered you a certain service which was the equivalent in dollars and cents. Sam was a modest fellow and would not like to embarrass any one."

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Darlington, turning a searching glance on the visitor.

"It's like this: Sam Dover wouldn't like to give away any little private business of his friend's. No, Sam was no piker, to blow on any one and such little business as that. And now, as I think it over, I am quite satisfied that you did not clearly understand the sort of will that Sam left."

"It doesn't matter, as I can have no interest in it," said Darlington, a trifle uneasily.

"The fact of the matter is," went on Fuzzy, "what I called Sam's will was not, in the strictest sense, a will at all. Some might call it a confession."

"A confession?" echoed Darlington.

"It would be more proper to call it that than anything else I can think of," replied Fuzzy. "A man on his deathbed makes some sort of a statement and has it taken down. Some might call it a will, and others might say it was a confession. It's funny how a fellow will get things mixed up—a fellow that's ignorant of the law and all that sort of rubbish that fogs the mind. Sam Dover told a mighty strange story."

"Oh, well, I don't care to hear it," said Darlington, impatiently, yet there was just the shadow of uneasiness in the glint of his eye.

Fuzzy rose. "Very well, Mr. Darlington," he said. "It is just as you please. If you don't care to listen to poor Sam's story, there are others who will. I thought it best to come to you first, you being his friend. But it doesn't matter."

He moved toward the door. Darlington stopped him with a wave of the hand. "Sit down!" he said. It was almost a command. Fuzzy resumed his seat without a word.

"What are you driving at?" demanded Darlington.

"I am not driving at anything in particular," replied Fuzzy, placidly. "I was about to tell you Sam Dover's story, but you said you did not want to hear it."

"You must remember that I do not know you," replied Darlington, "and I am not in the habit of listening to the stories of strangers. But you may go on with [illegible]."

"Thank you. I am sure you will like to hear what Sam Dover said, for it concerns yourself as well as others you have known. Sam tells it all so as to get it off his mind, for he don't allow he had done the right thing in some matters. It was while he was in your employ, first as a chauffeur and then as engineer aboard your launch, the Gull, that the things he told of happened.

"It was while he was with you at your bungalow down on the coast at Matagorda Bay, in Texas. You had had some bad luck, Sam said, and had gone down there to get away from the old crowd that had led you into a life of extravagance. You had also met with a great disappointment. A rich uncle of yours, Hiram Sparling, from whom you had expected a rich legacy, died and left his entire estate to your cousin, Mortimer Finch, a young man of near your own age. You and Finch had always been the best of friends, Sam said, and as both of you had been orphans from a very early age and had found a home with Hiram Sparling, you and Mortimer Finch had grown up together. You had reasons to believe you would share largely in your uncle's estate, and when you were cut off without a dollar, it is not strange that you should have been cast down a bit.

"'It looked a little tough,' says Dover to me, 'for a young man like Ben Darlington, who had had plenty of money all his life, and who had expected to get a fortune by his uncle's will, to be left without a penny. Darlington had a little bungalow down on the coast, and he took me with him and went down there to spend the winter hunting ducks and nosing about the islands down in the gulf, for he had a fine launch, The Gull, of which I was engineer and mate, with Darlington captain.

"'We had been down at the bay about a month when Mortimer Finch drops in upon us,' Sam Dover went on to say, 'and Darlington was mighty glad to see him, and for a week or so we had some fine times aboard The Gull, slipping up to Corpus Christi now and then for entertainment and refreshments, as the guests of Mortimer Finch, for he paid the freight, and was doing his best to have a good time and give us the same. You see, Finch was now a rich man, with not much taste for staying around the big hives where it is easiest to let loose of money. He wanted to do something, to get out and make his mark in the world somehow; so he had planned to go to Brazil and go up the Amazon on an exploring expedition. He wanted Darlington to go with him, but Darlington had no taste for such madness as he called it, and so Finch planned to stay with his cousin at the bungalow for a good long visit before starting for the Amazon.'"

At this point Darlington made a gesture of impatience. "Don't go into the details," he said. "I want to hear what it was that Sam Dover said about the business matter between himself and me."

"All right," nodded Fuzzy, "I'll come to the point. Mortimer Finch felt rather sorry for your having been disappointed about the will, and so knowing that the journey he was to take into the wilds of the Amazon basin was beset by many dangers, he made a will, and as you were his only living relative, he bequeathed everything to you. Is that right?"

"Yes," nodded Darlington. "Go on."

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"Mortimer Finch never went to the Amazon," went on Fuzzy, "and his body lies under the waters of Matagorda Bay. By his death you inherited an estate worth more than a million dollars, and only two persons know how he came to his death—you, Benjamin Darlington, and Sam Dover!"

Fuzzy leaned back in his chair, and sat regarding the man on the other side of the table with a penetrating scrutiny. Darlington took a cigar from an open box on the table, lit it, and for a moment not a word was spoken.

"You are simply reciting what everybody knows," said Darlington, breaking the silence. "As there was nobody on The Gull at the time of the accident, excepting Finch, Dover and myself, it is evident that Sam Dover and I were the only witnesses."

"One evening, just before dark, as you, Dover and Finch were returning from Corpus Christi aboard The Gull, Mortimer Finch met his death. The Gull had entered Matagorda Bay, and its prow was turned in the direction of the bungalow that stood near the water's edge on a little elevation a mile away. A storm was brewing, and The Gull was being raced for the little cove under the sheltering rocks that towered above the slender arm of the bay that extended in a curve between the sheltering walls. Dover was at the helm, while you and Finch stood forward watching the approach of the storm.

"Sam Dover heard a cry, and in the deepening darkness he saw you standing by the rail alone, and at the same instant he caught a fleeting glimpse of a dark form struggling with the waves as The Gull swept on its way. Sam Dover knew that Mortimer Finch was overboard, and his first move was to throw out a life preserver and bring the craft to. But before this could be done you were at his side. The helm was jerked from his hand, and The Gull allowed to continue on her way. Dover made another effort to grasp the helm, but you thrust him aside, telling him to keep watch and throw over some life preservers, while you brought The Gull about, declaring that you were doing your best to swing the craft back to the spot where Finch had fallen. But if you intended to do this, you did it very clumsily, for poor Mortimer Finch had gone down long before The Gull was got back to the spot where he was last seen battling with the waves.

"You never saw Finch again. An hour later The Gull was put into the cove. Mortimer Finch was lying dead at the bottom of Matagorda Bay, and you, who only a short hour or two before had been a pauper, were now a millionaire. You told Dover that it was an accident; that Finch had fallen overboard by accident, and that you did your best to save him. But Sam Dover knew better His testimony before any jury would hang you. You knew it, and so set to work to pacify him—to silence his tongue by bribery. That is the story told by Sam Dover. What have you to say to it?'"

"Only this," said Darlington, calmly. "If Sam Dover told you such a story, he was either a blackmailer or insane. But I should rather say that he was insane. You may go now, and if you are seen about the premises again, I'll have you locked up for blackmail."

Fuzzy was startled, dumfounded. He had anticipated an easy victory in the recital of the tragic story of Mortimer Finch's death, but now he found his story treated with contempt by the man whom he had expected to overwhelm by it; and worse still, he had been ordered from the premises and threatened with arrest.

But Fuzzy was determined not to give up without another effort. He got up and stood facing Darlington. "And you think Sam Dover was crazy when he told me that story?" he asked.

"I am sure of it, for there is not a word of truth in it," declared Darlington. "And that is not all; I don't believe that Sam Dover ever told you any such story."

"But I can prove it to you," insisted Fuzzy. "I took down Sam Dover's statement in writing, and I have got the document and can produce it when the time comes."

"Your written statement is no better than your word. If you had been told such a story and wanted to do the honorable thing, you would have laid the matter before the proper authorities instead of coming here to blackmail me into giving you money, thereby making yourself a party to the crime, if there had been a crime. If Sam Dover had done as you say he confessed to doing—taking money from me for keeping silent—he would himself have been a party to the crime after the fact, and no less guilty than I, if I had been guilty. Now you come, a blackmailer, trying to extort money from me in the same way. Get out of here at once! If I ever see you again I'll hand you over to the law!"

He waved his hand toward the door. Fuzzy stood for a moment, beaten, all his courage knocked completely out of him. He wanted time to think, and he thought it best to get away and do his thinking elsewhere. And without a word he left the room and the house.

As he stepped from the porch he came face to face with "Reddy," his partner.

"Reddy," he said, with emotion, "I told you I had a big scheme by which I could put us on Easy street, but it has busted and left us to keep to the road—that is, unless I can find some way to come back. I must have time to think, and I guess I'll have to do my thinking off these premises or go to jail," and he explained the situation to Reddy.

"Why, that isn't such a bad scheme if it wasn't blackmail you wanted to pull off," said Reddy. "You wouldn't want to take money that had been acquired by murder! If the man in there is guilty, as he seems to be from your story, he's not in position to put up any bluff. You don't know what to say to him, nor how to say it. Suppose we both go in and lay the matter before him? Come on."

They found Darlington sitting at his desk. He glanced at the intruders, and then as his eyes rested on Reddy he almost fell from his chair.

"Mortimer Finch! Good God!" he gasped. He sat trembling, his face of a greenish pallor.

"Yes, I am Mortimer Finch," confessed Fuzzy's partner, as he helped himself to a chair. "I was lucky enough not to go to the bottom of Matagorda Bay; but I got mussed up a bit when the waves chucked me against the rocks along the shore. Since then I have been knocking about, roughing it, just to find out how it feels to come in contact with the fuzzy edge of life; and to give you a chance to discover how it feels to get wealth at the price of a human life! But there! don't look so weak and frightened! I am not here in the role of avenger. Blood is thicker than water. I wish you would call a servant and have some refreshments served. We are a little hungry, aren't we, Fuzzy?"

And Fuzzy, who was standing with hands grasping the back of a chair, cried: "Good God!"

* * *

LIFE IN MEXICO.

Mexico, with irrigation and industrial development, could support a population greater than that of the United States, some say twice as great, but it has barely 15,000,000 inhabitants. A territory roughly similar in size and shape to that part of this country east of the Mississippi from New Orleans and St. Louis and a line drawn northeast from St. Louis to Lake Erie is occupied by fewer persons than there are in New York and Pennsylvania. The inhabitants can be divided into three divisions—the people of Spanish descent, those of combined European and native races, and the pure-blooded Indians.

These bare facts would in themselves, to any thoughtful person, explain many of the social and political troubles of Mexico, a writer in the Philadelphia Ledger observes. Add to them the fact that most of the 6,000,000 Indians have all the ignorance and semi-civilized vices of the Indians who slew Custer and his men and few of the savage virtues of primitive Indians; that they are dominated by a class that by race and instinct takes aristocratic ideas for granted and owns most of the land, and that between the two there is a mixed race composed of all gradations of mixed blood and a prey to all the vicious caste feelings which go with the sensitiveness and exaggerated pride of those who are not pure blood in a country where pure blood counts for so much, and you have what is more like a caldron than a melting pot.

The pure white stock is probably not more than 10 per cent of the whole, while the mestizos, or mixed race, are about half the population. The upper class Mexicans, like the Peruvians and other Spanish-Americans, pride themselves on their unmixed white descent and strive to preserve this condition. This is the "color line," and the term "Indio" still expresses something of contempt, notwithstanding the fact that some of the prominent men of Mexico's history have been drawn from the mestizo class, and in the case of Juarez from pure aboriginal stock. In ordinary times the foreign element numbers about 60,000, Spaniards predominating with about 16,000, and Americans numbering about 15,000. The British number about 3,000, the French about 4,000 and the Germans, 3,000

The mestizos shade off into the peon class, in which most of the Indians are—the great working class. The peons live by sufferance upon the soil which was wrested from their forbears by the white men. Enormous landed estates are held—indeed, in Chihuahua the largest single estate in the world exists. The population on the soil scarcely reaches twenty persons to the square mile, principally rural or inhabiting small towns, and there is ample room therefore for expansion in every locality.

The Mexican character must be summed up as that of a people in the making. Imagine a United States of America, in which the mulattoes, quadroons, octoroons and negroes formed 90 per cent of the population. There is no analogy to be drawn between the Indian and negro stock in this application of the principle beyond the observation of ethnologists that the offspring of different races are an unstable and incomplete factor. And this is stamped on the average Mexican physiognomy. Sometimes a high intelligence runs riot and an idealism untempered by sobriety—perhaps in one man will be some of the best blood in Europe mingled with the ferocity of the Apache. But such things mark a people not decadent, but evolving.

The upper-class Mexican is a well-educated man of the world His wealth has permitted him to be educated abroad, preferably in Paris, that Mecca of Spanish-Americans. The Mexican gentleman is courteous and punctilious, gives much attention to dress and ceremony, and the frock coat and high silk hat form his indispensable dress whenever possible. The Mexican shares the spirit of hospitality of other Spanish-Americans and has a chivalrous idealism which approaches Quixotism. Trembling on the verge of two races, his eyes look toward the Spain of his ancestors, and the fact that his pride is pointedly shown to be in some respects mere vanity in view of his many failures only makes that pride more imperious. It is this that makes Carranza, for instance, a man of the old Spanish stock, hate the "gringoes." Mexicans of his type really think they are the superiors of Americans, and that they cannot prove it by facts only increases their sensitive vanity.

These traits make their appearance in the characteristic Mexican pomposity and grandiloquence. He is not content to call himself a progressive or a conservative—he must call himself a "Cientifico," a scientific man. He does not speak of improvements he has instituted—he must speak of "an era of glorious progress" whenever a cornerstone is laid. Knowledge is always "profound knowledge." There is something important to be learned from this. Many are asking now, "How can puny Mexico dare for a moment to think of defying us?" Well, many in 1898 said the same thing about Spain. But proud Spain defied us. And Spanish Mexico, ten times prouder than Spain and on the whole a more difficult military proposition for us, is perfectly in character in defying us.

We hear much of semi-civilized Mexico." Yet it is a fact that the average Mexican is possessed with a feverish desire to be considered a resident of the most highly civilized nation in America. This feverish spirit produces railways where there are no roads, electric lights in streets, where there are no sewers and pretentious-looking stucco buildings where solid stone should have been employed. And under the garish electric arc, at night, or silhouetted against the new white stucco wall of some costly hygienic institution or art gallery, stands the incongruous figure of the half-naked and sandaled Indian, ignorant and poverty-stricken.

* * *

Too Natural.

The members of a certain golf club were recently getting tired of seeing the freckled face of a loyal urchin hanging over the hedge whenever they essayed a round on the links. Early and late, there was the same small boy apparently listening to everything that was said, and making copious notes in a very grimy pocketbook. The freckled face got on the players' nerves till at last the secretary was asked to endeavor to put an end to the nuisance.

The official interviewed the boy's mother and lodged a complaint.

"I can't see that Willie's doin' any harm," said the lady. "You haven't lost anything, have you?"

The secretary denied having suggested such a thing.

"I'm sure I dunno what fun he gets out o' seein' a lot of old men knock a ball about," continued the boy's mother, with some asperity. "He's never said a word about it at home, but I'll make inquiries and let you know."

She called at the secretary's house next day in high dudgeon.

"Ought to be ashamed o' yourselves, all the lot of you, too," she declared. "I've had a look at that pocketbook you was talkin' such a lot about. Disgraceful, that's what it is."

"Disgraceful?"

"Yes, disgraceful. Willie's been playin' at soldiers with the neighbors' children lately, and they've made him drill sergeant."

"Well?" asked the secretary.

"It ain't well," snapped the lady. "Most o' your members have been helpin' him play the part too natural. That pocketbook's full o' swear words."

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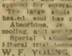

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His Purple Cat.

(Continued From Page 9.)

his hand. "I'll have help here before you know it.'

"Good-by, Buddy. Luck to ye!" Old Ike spoke gruffly. "And say, ye might look 'round a bit as ye go 'long—might strike sumthin'—no telling. Be careful of the water——"

This remarkable story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00 and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Helpful Father.

An old farmer visited his daughter, who had tidies on the backs of her chairs. As he was sitting by the window he spied the minister coming to visit "Jean," as she was called. As she went to the door her father, not being accustomed to such finery, snatched all the tidies off the chairs and threw them under the table. After the minister had gone away, John says to Jean:

"Aye, Jean, lass; glad I was to get yer washing oot o' the way before the minister cam' in."

At the Baseball Game.

"Dearie, what is that man running for?"

"He just hit the ball."

"I know, but is he required to chase it, too?"

* * *

That Suit.

"Did her mother oppose your suit?"

"Well, she said it was a hand-me-down!"

Classified Want Ads

Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500 N. Dearborn St. CHICAGO, ILL.

AGENTS WANTED

EVERY HOME ON FARM, IN SMALL TOWN or suburb, needs and will buy the wonderful Aladdin kerosene (coal-oil) Mantle Lamp. Five times as bright as electric. Tested and recommended by Government and 34 leading Universities. Awarded Gold Medal. One farmer cleared over $500 in 6 weeks. Hundreds with rigs or autos earning $100 to $300 per month. No capital required; we furnish goods on time to reliable men. Write quick for sample lamp for free trial, distributor's proposition and secure appointment in exclusive territory. Mantle Lamp Co., 607 Aladdin Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

WHO WANTS TO MAKE MORE MONEY selling brushes that every household needs? Special method of getting entrance to demonstrate. Fuller Sanitary Brushes are nationally advertised—largest output—best terms and prices—western distributing stations. Your territory is valuable. Write Fuller Brush Company, Hartford, Conn. Rock Island, Ill.

AGENTS AND SALESMEN WANTED—MEN and women—to sell our high grade phonographs. Direct from factory to consumer. Extensive territory. Wonderful opportunities. [illegible] to $[illegible] monthly profits. Write at once for compact proposition. Mandel Manufacturing Co., [illegible] So. Laflin St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS—SELL RICH-LOOKING IMPORTED [illegible] rugs [illegible] sold [illegible] in 4 days. Profit $[illegible]. You can do same. Write for sample offer selling plan, exclusive territory. Sample rug by parcel post prepaid [illegible]. Condon, Importer, Stonington, Maine.

TURN SPARE TIME INTO $12 OR MORE weekly. We want wide-awake representatives everywhere to take orders for Goodlow's Good Clothes, Suits and Overcoats for men and young men. Previous experience unnecessary. Start now. Goodlow's, 80D Fifth Avenue, New York.

AGENTS—EARN $100-$200 PER MONTH IN your spare time. No experience needed. Wonderful proposition for men or women. Hundreds of homes want our product. Write at once. Address: M. B. S., care of Blade and Ledger.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, FURNISHING everything; men and women, $30.00 to $200.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories," home anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. Z. Ragsdale Co., East Orange, N. J.

PORTRAIT AGENTS SEND FOR OUR large catalog. 16x20 frames 14c up. [illegible] Samples free. Credit given. Address Friedman Mfg. Co., Box 120, Mar[illegible], Mo.

AGENTS—PAIR SILK HOSE FREE. STATE size and color. Beautiful line direct from mill. Good profits. Write today. Triplewear Mills, Dept. F, 112 So. 13th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS! HIGHLY PROFITABLE RETURNS selling our Dress Goods, Hosiery, Underwear and General Dry Goods. Biggest Proposition. Write at once. National Importing & Mfg. Co., Dept. CA 425 Broadway, New York.

1916's SENSATION! 11-PIECE TOILET ARticle set selling like blazes at $1, with $1 [illegible] set free! Whirlwind stunt! Newcome made $18 one day! Write M. Pierce Co., 906 Lake St., Chicago.

AGENTS—500% PROFIT; GOLD AND SILver sign letters for store and office windows. Any one can put on. Write today for free sample. Metallic Letter Co., 416 N. Clark, Chicago.

LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS REPREsentatives to sell shirts, underwear, hosiery, dresses, waists, skirts, direct to homes. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 586 Broadway, New York City.

BIG PAY—AGENTS NOT EARNING $100 monthly should write the largest manufacturers of transparent handled knives and razors in the world. We will show you how. Novelty Cutlery Co., 123 Bar St., Canton, O.

AGENTS—I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME that's a dandy. New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Lacassian Co., Dept. 21, St. Louis, Mo.

GUARANTEED CUSTOM RAINCOATS. BIGgest commissions. Largest line. Lowest selling prices. Big free offers. Guaranteed Raincoat Co., Clerk B, Boston, Mass.

BOYS—GIRLS—ADULTS—SELL A HOUSEhold necessity, always a repeat order for you. Big money and excellent premiums. Write The Welkin Sales Co., Warren, Pa.

HUSTLERS—$20 TO $30 MADE WEEKLY distributing circulars, samples, tacking signs, etc. Advertisers' National Agency, Dept. B60, Chicago.

REMNANT STORE, CINCINNATI, OHIO. Greatest dry goods bargains on earth. Agents and store keepers supplied.

HELP WANTED

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money—to better yourself—to buy, sell or exchange goods or services, are offered here.

$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN; distribute 2,000 free pkgs. Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your town. No money or experience needed. B. W. Ward Co., 218 Institute, Chicago.

LADY OR GENTLEMAN TO TRAVEL FOR old established firm. No canvassing. Staple line. $18 weekly, pursuant to contract. Expenses advanced. G. K. Nichols, Philadelphia, Pa. Pepper Bldg.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ARE EASY TO get; my free book FG tells how; write today—now. Earl Hopkins, 1024 Marden Building, Washington, D. C.

HELP WANTED—(Continued)

MEN AND WOMEN WANTED—$75.00 month. List Government Jobs open—Free. Franklin Institute, Dep't N710, Rochester, N. Y.

CHAUFFEURS GET $18 WEEK. LEARN while earning. Write for sample lessons. Franklin Institute, Dept. N810, Rochester, N. Y.

YOU CAN MAKE FROM $10 TO $20 A DAY and lifetime income. Francis Deeds Company, 4600 Calumet Ave., Chicago.

$25 WEEKLY COLLECTING NAMES AND addresses. Send stamp. Superba Co., W52, Baltimore, Md.

WE PAY 25c EACH FOR FARMERS' names. Send dime for contract. Sun, Leroy, Mich.

MALE HELP WANTED

NO STRIKE: HONEST, SOBER MEN everywhere for firemen, brakemen, baggagemen. $120 monthly. Promotion. Experience unnecessary. 686 Railway Bureau, East St. Louis, Ills.

GOVERNMENT EXAMINATIONS — THOROUGH instruction, $5. Returned if not appointed. Particulars free. American Civil Service School, Washington, D. C.

EITHER SEX—ADDRESS POSTAL CARDS at home evenings; $15 a week easily made, full instructions, 10c. The Miller Co., 828 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

I WILL START YOU EARNING $4 DAILY at home, silvering mirrors, free instructive booklet. G. F. Redmond, Dept. 400, Boston, Mass.

BE AN AUTOMOBILE EXPERT IN SIX weeks. Our big book tells you how. Automobile Training School, 1052 Locust St., Kansas City, Mo.

BE A DETECTIVE. EARN FROM $150.00 to $300.00 per month; travel over the world. Write C. T. Ludwig, 320 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

LEARN TO MAKE MIRRORS. $4 DAILY. Particulars for stamp. S. A. McDonald, Peru, Ind.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

A RARE OPPORTUNITY; COMFORTABLE living; home sewing; plain cloth seams. Any sewing machine. Steady. No canvassing. No triflers wanted. Samples 10c. Returned if not satisfactory. Home Sewers Co., Jobbers' Sewing [illegible], Del.

FREE TO ANY WOMAN, BEAUTIFUL 42-piece gold decorated dinner set for distributing only 3 doz. free cakes of Complexion Soap. No money or experience needed. B. W. Tyrrell Ward, 218 Institute Place, Chicago.

FIVE BRIGHT, CAPABLE LADIES TO travel, demonstrate and sell dealers. $25 to $50 per week. Railroad fare paid. Goodrich Drug Company, Dept. 85, Omaha, Neb.

LADIES—MAKE SHIELDS AT HOME, $10 per 100, no canvassing required. Send stamped addressed envelope for particulars. Eureka Co., Dept. 17, Kalamazoo, Mich.

WOMEN TO SEW; MATERIAL PREPAID to your house. Plain sewing. No canvassing. Send stamped envelope for prices paid. Universal Co., Dept. 54, Phila., Pa.

HELP WANTED—Male and Female

U. S. GOVERNMENT WANTS CLERKS—Men and Women, 18 or over. $75.00 month. List of positions now obtainable—free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dep't N30, Rochester, N. Y.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FORTUNES MADE FROM GUSHER OIL wells. In the famous Humble, Texas, field, where single wells have made $10,000.00 daily. We will drill for gusher wells on leases closely adjacent to this gusher territory. We offer limited number of shares at $10 each; terms $2 monthly. Write today for new plan, maps and free literature. Continental Oil Association, 230 First National Bank Bldg., Houston, Texas.

MEN AND WOMEN—$3.00 DAILY; SPARE time at home, no canvassing, success guaranteed. Write today. Hiram Barton, 314 West 48 St., New York.

AUTOMOBILES AND ACCESSORIES

BIG NEW LIST OF USED MOTORCYCLES, the best bargains we have ever offered. Over one hundred splendid machines, all makes, all guaranteed, specially priced from $30.00 up. Write today for your copy—means money saved. Western Supplies Co., 1448 Larimer St., Denver, Colo.

REAL ESTATE

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, SUBURBAN FARM home, five acres, level rich land. Attractive new cottage and out-houses. Near deep water, well elevated. Will produce yearly $1,500 in truck, poultry and fruit. Delightful climate, many city conveniences. Terms only $325 cash, balance ($1,650) like rent, monthly or yearly (5 years). Write for our free literature on Fertile Virginia Farms. Address, K. T. Crawley, Industrial Agent, Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, Room 531, Richmond, Virginia.

A SMALL FARM IN CALIFORNIA WILL make you more money with less work. You will live longer and better. Delightful climate. Rich soil. Hospitable neighbors. Good roads, schools and churches. Write for our San Joaquin Valley illustrated folders free. C. L. Seagraves, Industrial Commissioner, AT&SF Ry., 1931 Ry. Exch., Chicago.

FARMS FOR SALE

POOR MAN'S CHANCE—$5.00 MONTHLY buys 40 acres good land, near town, price $200.00. Box 425-8, Carthage, Mo.

FOR SALE

SACRIFICE SALE — AMELIA HOTEL, brick, forty rooms, good business, railroad patronage. Eight thousand dollars. P. T. Southall, Amelia, Va.

FARMS WANTED

FARMS WANTED—HAVE 4,000 BUYERS; describe your unsold property. 504 Farmers Exchange, Denver, Colo.

MOVING PICTURE BUSINESS

$35.00 PROFIT NIGHTLY. SMALL CAPITAL starts you. No experience needed. Our machines are used and endorsed by Government institutions. Catalog Free. Atlas Moving Picture Co., Franklin Bldg., Chicago.

$50.00—NIGHTLY—START IN THE MOVing picture business on our installment plan. No experience necessary. Free catalog. Monarch Film Service, Dept. C, Memphis, Tenn.

$50.00—NIGHTLY—START IN THE MOVing Picture business on our installment plan. No experience necessary. Free catalog. Moving Picture Sales Company, Dept. A, 540 Plymouth Place, Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS, SHORT STORIES, poems; $100 each. No correspondence course. Details free. Atlas Publishing Co., 344, Cincinnati.

PHOTOPLAYS, STORIES, ETC.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS FOR PHOTOPLAYS, Stories, etc. We accept them in any form—correct Free—sell on commission. Big rewards! Make money. Get details now. Writer's Selling Service, 10 S. Main, Auburn, N. Y.

PATENTS

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Actual search and patentability report free. Send sketches and description, or model of your invention. My patent sales service gets full value. 1916 Edition ninety-page patent book free. George P. Kimmel, 260 Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

WANTED, AN IDEA! WHO CAN THINK of some simple thing to patent? Protect your ideas, they may bring you wealth. Write for "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 174, Washington, D. C.

INVENTIONS WANTED—YOUR IDEAS MAY bring wealth. Send sketch for free advice. Patents secured through our Credit System advertised free in Popular Mechanics Magazine. Book free. Waters Company, 4276 War[illegible] Building, Washington, D. C.

PROTECTIVE PATENTS PROCURED promptly, 104 pg. Blue Book free. Trademarks registered. Robb & Robb, 248-252 Southern Building, Washington, D. C.

THE PATENTOME IS FREE. AN EDUCA[illegible] in obtaining patents. Established [illegible] Anderson & Son, Attorneys, 713 7th St., Washington, D. C.

PERSONAL

CUT THIS OUT QUICK, MAILING IT BACK within ten days, and we will tell you how you can secure two years' membership in our Club, free, which will entitle you to thousands of addresses of wealthy, refined, handsome ladies desiring early marriage. Write quick enclosing some postage for large collection beautiful photos and descriptions of ladies of means. Sincere Club, B 420, Valley, Nebr.

PERSONAL—CONTINUED

SUFFERERS FROM NERVOUS, WEAK, run down conditions should take Juven Pills. They accomplish marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. by C. I. Hood Co., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, Lowell, Mass. (Z.R.)

LET ME READ YOUR CHARACTER FROM your handwriting. Mind you get a good reading that will help you in love, health, business and domestic affairs. Price 10c. Money back if dissatisfied. H. G. Beauchamp, 2583 8th Ave., New York City.

A LETTER TO DR. ROWE THE SPECIAList will obtain his latest book on symptoms and cure of varicocele, stricture and urinary diseases. Every man should have it; postage 4 cts. Send today. Dr. Rowe, 112 N. Pearl St., Buffalo, N. Y.

FUR MAKING AND REPAIRING. DO YOUR own fur work at home, or start retail fur business; easy to learn, big profits. Booklet A free about "The Practical Furrier." L. Lichtenstein, 417 Granby Street, Norfolk, Virginia.

WEAK, NERVOUS, RUN DOWN MEN; REmember we Cure chronic, nervous, blood, kidney, bladder and private diseases. Book, symptom blank and advice free, sealed. Dr. Meyers, 316 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

USE OXOCIDE, DRUGLESS TREATMENT, guaranteed for all forms of blood and skin disorders, old sores, ulcers and blood poisoning in general. Write for advice free. H. Albertine, Box 1685, Denver, Colo.

MARRY RICH. BE HAPPY AND PROSPERous. Big list of descriptions and photos of congenial people with means free. Sealed, confidential. Either sex. Standard Club, Box 607, Grayslake, Ill.

LADIES—WHEN DELAYED OR IRREGUlar, use Triumph Pills, always dependable. "Relief" and particulars free. Not sold at drug stores. Write National Medical Institute, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MEN. BE STRONG, HEALTHY, DON'T BE Seminally Weak. Dollar Pill brings relief or money back. Formula any druggist can fill, send now. Eclipse Co., Box 311, Alexandria, Va.

MARRY—FREE PHOTOS, BEAUTIFUL ladies; descriptions and directory; pay when married. New Plan Co., Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY WITH photos and description free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 28, Kansas City, Mo.

LOVINE SACHET NEVER FAILS. REAL thing guaranteed. $1.75 outfit, both sexes, sachet and secrets 20 cts. Union Co., Palatine, Ill.

MARRY IF LONELY, HUNDREDS RICH wish marriage soon; confidential; descriptions free. "The Successful Club," Box 556, Oakland, Calif.

LADIES—FREE BOOKLET DESCRIBING wonderful U. S. patented article worth its weight in gold. Indispensable to married ladies. Sent sealed. Hygiene & Kalalogy Co., Dept. X., 122 West 13th St., New York City.

GO ON THE STAGE; OR BE A MOVIE ACTor. Will tell you how! Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Gadd Co., 4037 Easton, St. Louis, Mo.

LADIES—DON'T EXPERIMENT, GET THE best. Dr. Welch's Double-Strength Tablets do the work. Price $5.00. Welch Medicine Co., Chula, Ga.

"LOVER'S PERFUME POWDER." DOUBLE strength and guaranteed. Sent prepaid with secret and full directions, only 20c coin. Scientific Extract Co., Akron, Ohio.

LADIES—ABNORMALLY DELAYED? TAKE Mexican Herb "Monthly" Compound. Safe, sure, harmless. Triple-Strength $1.00. Guaranteed. Tex Company, Riviera, Texas.

RENEW THE POWERS OF YOUTH. "THE Pill That Will," gives you Vim, Vigor and Vitality. $1.00 per box. Custar Drug Co., Custar, Ohio.

WIDOW, 24, WORTH $20,000 TO $30,000, would marry. No objections to honorable poor man. Mrs. C., care Messenger, Box 584, Los Angeles, Cal.

MARRY—WOULD YOU MARRY A NICE lady worth $20,000? Mrs. Warn, 243 N. Coronado St., Los Angeles, Cal.

OLDEST, LARGEST CLUB, 60,000 MEMbers, free. Mrs. Wrubel, Box 26, Oakland, California.

LADIES, TAKE COTTON ROOT TABLETS, monthly regulator, $1.00. Radium Mfg. Co., K. St. Louis, Mo.

GET MARRIED — BEST MATRIMONIAL paper published. Mailed free. The Correspondent, Toledo, Ohio.

"MEN! SANITO FINGER COTS, PURE rubber, three sizes 1-25c, 3-50c, 7-$1.00. BL. Rex Specialty Co., Kalamazoo, Mich.

"SHE," DANDY BOOK, 25c. FOUR NIFTY poses, 10c. Catalog, 2c. Duff, 2713 Mo[illegible]t, Chicago.

GENTLEMEN'S ARTICLE 10c. DIME BACK if dissatisfied. Sullivan Co., 24 Rose, Battle Creek, Mich.

GET MARRIED; LARGE, HANDSOMELY illustrated matrimonial magazine mailed free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

EXCHANGE CARDS, LETTERS, PHOTOS. [illegible] Friendship club. Membership 10c. Jolly [illegible] Exchange, Decatur, Indiana.

WEALTHY WIDOW, 27, ANXIOUS TO marry. Box 959, Los Angeles, Cal.

BIG MARRIAGE DIRECTORY FREE. MANY wealthy. Ideal Pub. Co., Geneva, N. Y.

Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday
By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to the Chicago Ledger. The address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid

BACK NUMBERS.

Back numbers of the Ledger promptly mailed. Always give the dates desired, plainly written, accompanied by your full address. Price 5 cents per copy.

ADVERTISING RATES.

For display, $2.50 each Agate Line; for Classified, 30 cents a word, per insertion for 1,250,000 circulation in the Chicago Ledger and The Saturday Blade combined. These two weeklies have an average circulation of

1,250,000

COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS.

Some men seem to enjoy being mean.

The chronic kicker is always on the job.

Woman's sphere seems to be the earth.

Time is money to a man who buys on time.

It pays to wait—if you draw wages as a waiter.

The proof of the pudding is in the amount left over.

One way to make friends—Keep your advice to yourself.

A kiss by moonlight is one of love's strongest arguments.

A baby cuts his teeth before he is on speaking terms with them.

Courtship after marriage is more important than it was before.

The greatest event in a hen's life is merely an egg and a cackle.

A miser is a great lover of generosity in everybody except himself.

There is danger that a little learning will result in a swelled head.

A man may be lucky because he is married—or because he isn't.

The stronger the butter in the tub the weaker it is in the market.

Many a man doesn't realize what he is up to until he is called down.

The church with the highest steeple isn't always the nearest heaven.

Doing as one pleases soon ceases to be fascinating if no one objects.

Some men will even go to church on Sunday rather than stay at home.

Poverty is not a crime—but that isn't the reason so many people are poor.

Some people can't stand prosperity, but the majority don't get a chance to try.

So many people wait in vain for their ships to come in because they were never launched.

Money talks, but it doesn't say half as much as the wife of a man who declines to give up.

Opportunity likes to knock at the door of the man who has a little cash saved up for a rainy day.

A good bluffer is a man who can keep the other fellow from finding out that he is afraid to fight

A gosling never attempts to teach a goose, yet there are children who imagine they are wiser than their parents.

When you see a girl sit down to dinner and tackle a juicy steak smothered in onions, it's a sign that she isn't greatly worried over love affairs.

Home and Health

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

All bacon is improved by having boiling water poured over it before frying.

Kerosene oil is one of the best things to remove finger marks on varnished wood. Just rub with cloth on which oil is poured and then use dry, clean cloth to polish.

When the mayonnaise separates, becomes clotted, and seemingly hopeless add the white of an egg, putting in slowly half a teaspoonful at a time until the mixture is smooth again. In almost every instance the separation will be overcome.

❦

BEAUTY HINTS.

Many of us neglect our eyes until they are in such a dangerous state that we must care for them. How many read in poor light, sleep with the light streaming in on the eyes or strain them in the sunlight when bathing at the seashore or motoring!

How many of you bathe the eyes daily?

The daily eye bath is one of the most important and essential parts of every person's life. None would live in a house with unwashed windows. But we will go year after year without washing the windows of the soul.

When one considers how a clear, sparkling eye adds to the attractiveness of a face, one realizes that the best of care should be given this sensitive organ.

I am told by physicians that indigestion, nervousness, headaches and other ailments are often the result of weak, strained or tired eyes. Many women do not know their eyes are not normal; many are too vain to wear glasses. They prefer to disrupt and upset the entire system rather than wear a pair of glasses because they look better without them. If the trouble is taken in time the glasses need never be worn in public.

The eye bath should be taken in the morning and before retiring. The eye cup fits over the open eye and the water will wash it out. Soft or distilled water should be used. A pinch of salt thoroly diluted strengthens the eye and rests it. Or boric acid is also a good eye wash. The cup must be well cleansed before using on either eye. Sometimes one eye will be infected while the other is quite well and the eye cup will carry the infection. Under no conditions should more than one person use the cup. If one can spare the time after washing the eyes it is wise to lay a damp cloth over them and lie down for ten minutes.

When reading one should always sit so that the light comes from the back or over the left shoulder. The book or paper should be held about two feet away. If one must hold the book nearer or further away to read with comfort an eye specialist should be visited.

I want to remind you of the danger for those who rub the eye with the hands or fingers or handkerchief. Many cases of eye trouble can be traced to them.

❦

NEEDLEWORK.

Here is a ridiculous little gift which may come in handy for slipping into an envelope with a cheery letter for a youngster, an invalid friend or some one who just naturally appreciates a good laugh. It is a small bookmark made with a half-inch colored satin ribbon and on each end is attached a small doll of wool. It may be black wool or white wool, and it is tied in tassel style, with colored cotton for eyes, nose and mouth. The whole "doll" is not an inch long. Try one of these bookmarkers with a bit of ribbon and some left-over embroidery silk or cotton.

❦

FASHION NOTES.

Organdie is in high favor for dresses with flaring skirts.

A wreath of pinked ribbon ruching is a new feature in millinery.

Fashion brings us the pointed bodice, but it is not boned, as the bodice of old.

A dainty little set made of ribbon, composed of hat trimmed entirely with ribbon, with a cape and bag to match, would make an accessory that will effectually disguise any simple little frock for afternoon wear.

Some of the short, full, silk skirts with velvet flounces beneath have straight gathered pockets on either side drawn into a wide heading. A new model has bodice and skirt cut in one in front, the bodice opening in a V shape, the side of the skirt displaying a very wide plait; a kilted basque falls from the waist, finished by a belt beneath the arms, the sleeves quite tight.

One cannot but note the prevalence of taupe-colored veils on well dressed women There is something very soft and becoming about a bit of taupe-colored tissue stretched before the face and the delicate tint that is more flattering to the complexion than black. The Lorelei pattern is worthy of its name, for it is distinctly alluring. Vines in delicate design stray up a fine hexagon mesh at either side of the face so that the latter seems peeping from a fairy bower. More conventional is a trellis pattern, and the lattice mesh which crossbars the face with definite lines is liked by women who wear tailored hats

❦

RECIPES.

HOT WATER GINGERBREAD—One cupful of molasses, one scant teaspoonful of soda, one tablespoonful of ginger, one-half teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of shortening melted, one-half cupful of boiling water, two cupfuls of flour Mix the ingredients in the order given and beat well. Bake in a shallow pan in a rather hot oven about twenty minutes.

BARLEY SOUP—Melt two ounces of butter in a saucepan, add one ounce of pearl barley and fry lightly over a slow fire for three minutes; then add the following vegetables, previously cleaned and peeled, and cut into small dice or squares: One small carrot, one small onion, one leek, one small turnip and half a stalk of celery; fry all together for another five minutes. Next moisten with three pints of water and let cook slowly for about an hour, stirring occasionally to prevent burning, and removing the scum as it rises to the surface. Before serving add the yolks of three eggs beaten up with a gill of cream and season to taste with salt and pepper and a grate of nutmeg. Reheat the soup while stirring, but without letting it actually boil again

GLACE CHERRIES—Select firm sweet ones from which the stems have not been removed. Put a pound of granulated sugar into a perfectly clean porcelain-lined saucepan with a gill of cold water. Boil it until it becomes a sirup. Do not stir during the boiling process. Try the sirup by dropping a little bit of cold water into it occasionally. When it changes to a brittle candy it is done. Remove the saucepan immediately from the fire and set in a larger pan of boiling water. Dip each cherry quickly into the hot sirup and lay on waxed paper to dry. If you find the sirup is becoming too thick before the dipping is over with, add a little boiling water. Stand the waxed paper in a warm place to dry, and a pretty gloss will appear on the candied cherries

❦

THE IDEAL WIFE.

A Scotch divine, dealing with the subject of the "ideal wife," said he considered that the ideal wife of modern times must possess three great qualities:

Fidelity, and this meant loyalty and devotion. Perfect confidence was the basis of domestic happiness; trust was the foundation on which it must rest.

Industry, and this comprised housewifely ability, diligence and efficiency. The ideal wife should be able to glorify the commonplace

Stimulus. The third quality she must possess is wifely inspiration, incentive and encouragement.

In times gone by subjection and submission were considered the ruling principles, but our ideas have undergone great changes, which should be all for the best.

❦

PROFESSION AND HOME.

That a married woman can keep up her profession and her home as well is being proved by the principal of one of the largest schools for girls in New York.

She has a twelve-room apartment run by a capable maid and a Japanese cook. She took up her teaching again when her daughter was 2 years old, and has managed to prepare her daughter for college at the age of 15

Anne Warner, the authoress, also has been married three years and does her writing at home by settling her housekeeping by 9 o'clock in the morning and then shutting herself up in her study to write until 5 o'clock, the hours of a business man, to which she considers herself entitled

Fall 1916 Suit Free
A WONDERFUL amazing OFFER

your friends and take a few orders for our high grade, Made-to-Measure Clothes.
$25 EXTRA A WEEK AND YOUR OWN CLOTHES FREE
NOTHING LIKE IT EVER OFFERED
SPENCER MEAD COMPANY
Dept. 1102 CHICAGO

MEN WANTED
LEARN TO DRIVE AND REPAIR AUTOMOBILES AND TRACTORS
Big demand for trained men. Earn from $75 to $150 per month. Learn in 6 weeks by the
SWEENEY SYSTEM
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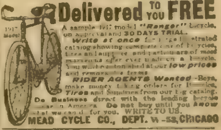

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Motorcycle Mark

Or, Rivals of the Wheel

By Jasper Merriweather

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CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE CABIN OF THE GUIDE.

"HELP! Oh, Mark, come back and pull me out of this mud!"

From the fact that Bantam was able to shout in this way, Mark, who had immediately stopped short on the start of the rise of the next hill, understood that the unfortunate one at least could not have plunged into the muck bed head-first.

He rushed back, leaving his machine on the road. There was considerable floundering going on amidst the green stuff that covered much of the surface of the soft ooze, and he soon discovered Bantam making his way slowly toward firm ground.

By catching up a broken branch Mark was able to assist his chum more or less, so that presently the unfortunate one was drawn out of his nasty berth. He was such a sight that it was hard for the other to keep from bursting into a roar of laughter; but, strange to say, before Bantam would consent to sit down, and allow his lower extremities to be scraped free from the clinging mud, he begged Mark to take a look at his machine.

"Is it smashed so bad that I'll have to drop out of this race against time, Mark?" he went on to say, plaintively. "Oh, please look it over, and let me know! Never mind about me. I'm not hurt, thank goodness, even if I am a sight. This stuff will come off; and I c'n buy new leggings if necessary; but whatever am I to do if the buzz-wheel is wrecked, and no blacksmith shop within ten miles of us, I bet you? Tell me the worst, Mark, that's a good feller; and then I c'n breathe easy again."

So Mark, taking pity on his comrade, proceeded to look the motorcycle over. He found that there were several things the matter with it, among others that the front tire had a puncture, which might account for Bantam losing his control in such a strange way.

"What's the answer, Mark?" asked the owner, almost holding his breath with deep anxiety.

"In a pretty bad way, but I guess I can fix it up again. The tire will have to be patched, and that's going to take some time; but we've come prepared for anything like that, so let's get busy. While I start in here you'd better scrape some of the worst of that mud off, or else you'll make a terrible mess of everything you hit up against."

"Oh, sure I will, Mark," sang out the other, with renewed cheeriness, as he realized that the accident might, after all, not prove to be as bad as he had feared at first.

Both of them were soon busily engaged, after Mark had drawn his machine off the road, so that it might not be in the way of any one who chanced to come along; altho travelers seemed to be few and far between in this lonely region.

Half an hour passed, and then Mark announced that he believed he had the punctured tire in fairly decent shape.

"It ought to hold out," he told Bantam, "tho I'd rather it was on the rear wheel; because if it suddenly goes flat it's apt to give you some trouble trying to keep from repeating that header. Now, let me see what else needs attention."

The other damages proved to be slight, and when Bantam learned this he expressed great joy.

"Well, that taking a cropper into the bog wasn't what you'd call fun," he remarked, as they pushed their heavy machines up the rise, since it was next to impossible for Bantam to get started on the up-grade; "but it might have been so much worse that I ain't saying anything."

"I should think you wouldn't," remarked his chum, turning aside to smile broadly at the recollection of the sight the other had presented as he came staggering out of the mire, and looking like the worst hobo ever seen, indeed, even now his trousers and leggings were dreadfully soiled, and it would be a long time before he could brush the last of that black mud off his garments.

At the top of the rise they mounted again, and were off. Despite his assurance with regard to the holding qualities of his patch, Mark seemed to be more or less concerned about something, for he often turned in the saddle, to glance back, as if to assure himself that all was going on smoothly.

Bantam had called attention to the fact that a motor car had recently climbed that same hill they toiled up, resting several times before reaching the summit; and he even expressed more or less curiosity as to whether it could have been the red car in which Mr. Clifford and his two companions were seated at the time he and Mark watched them go past.

There was always this feeling of dark uncertainty about the immediate future, as tho all sorts of schemes might be attempted looking to detaining them, thus rendering their hurried trip to the Adirondack wilds of no avail.

Bantam was beginning to show signs of weariness, his chum could not but notice; nor was Mark at all surprised. He remembered first of all that the other was a beginner at this sort of work; and also that he had never been very spry at getting around in the various games the boys of Cumminsville High played, summer and winter.

Perhaps Mark could easily see that it was going to devolve upon him to carry those precious papers in safety to the rich widow. Well, if that came about he would not shrink from the task; and as he rode on he may have been laying all sorts of plans calculated to meet emergencies that might arise suddenly, for that was his way of doing.

They had started on Monday afternoon, and now Tuesday was pretty near over, which would allow them just two more days to find the wandering lawyer, secure the papers he was carrying about with him, unconscious of the fact that both he and Mrs. Lightfoot had made a mistake of a whole week with regard to the date when they had to be signed by the lady in the presence of witnesses or be forfeited; and get all the way back to far-distant Cumminsville, in the west-central part of the great State of New York.

Until they had come upon the judge, of course there was no telling how things might turn out. Mark understood this even while figuring so far ahead; but he did not think it good policy to say anything of this sort to Bantam.

The poor fellow was having the time of his life keeping up, and any damper cast on his hopes was apt to act in a serious way on his ability to manage his swift steed, so that another accident might follow. That was the main reason Mark kept his own counsel in the matter.

So the coming of evening found them.

"Old Forge isn't very far away now, and if we had a full moon I'd even say we might try and make it tonight," Mark ventured to say; "but perhaps we'd better not try night riding when so much depends on our keeping from accidents. Besides, we'd always have to stand the risk of falling into some sly trap."

"You're right, Mark, as you always are," agreed the docile and tired Bantam, "and I'd be mighty well pleased right now if only we ran across another farmer like Mr. Rideout. Um! Just to think of that spread makes my mouth water, that's what!"

"Well, there isn't any chance of such good luck coming our way up here," the other told him; "because farmers aren't found around these mountains to any extent, I understand. It used to be all logging up here, and that's why we've seen so many tracts of land with only young trees starting up. The State has undertaken to build up a new forest reserve on burned-over ground. Here and there we've found the original pine woods, and they look mighty good to me."

"Lucky we stuck a few things in our bags, then, so if we had to camp out for a single night we wouldn't starve," Bantam remarked, with a sigh.

"Oh, we haven't got to that just yet," his chum assured him; "and right now I c'n see a cabin ahead there on that rise of ground. Like as not it belongs to some woods guide, or a game warden; and he might take pity on a couple of tired and hungry fellows who would only too willingly pay for being kept over night."

"Goodness sakes alive! I hope it turns out that way!" Bantam called out, for at the time they were closer together than usual, as slow progress had been the rule for the last half-hour; and immediately afterward he added: "Say, I c'n see that he's got a little stable back of his house, so if it came to the worst he might let us sleep in the hay. I reckon I could sleep standin' up if I had to; that is, after I'd had some supper."

As they approached the cabin several dogs began to bark, but they were fastened up so as to prevent them from chasing deer, which is against the law, and any hound caught in the act is liable to be killed without redress by the owner.

A man came out of the cabin, and shading his eyes with his hand looked down the road toward the advancing motorcycle boys, who of course waved their hands to him, as tho desirous of courting his good will.

It turned out that the man was a woods guide in season, and he had a warm welcome for the two boys, who he saw were built after his own heart, fond of the open air, and with the true instincts of young sportsmen.

"Course you kin stay over with me and my family," he told them, when Mark put the momentous question. "I hain't got only a shakedown to offer you; but there's plenty of grub in the shanty, such as it is; and my woman is a prime cook, if I do say it. I could name a number of big guns that have liked her messes so as to push in for three helpings. And in a book writ by one as has been the President of the country, I'm told, you'll find the name of Ben Guffing mentioned. I guided him once, and if he ever comes this way a'gin he promised to give me the job."

After that it was an easy matter to fix themselves comfortably. Ben's wife and two small children were eager to hear the news from below, since they did not often have strangers stop over. When the father was away these two, a boy and a girl, neither of them more than 10 or 11 years of age, helped the mother in her duties of caring for the cow, the chickens, and the garden.

Bantam was well satisfied with the bountiful supper that later on, after darkness had fallen, the guide's wife spread before them. If it lacked the variety which had characterized the table of Mr. Rideout, at least there was an abundance, and Bantam ate until he could hardly breathe, such a tremendous appetite had the open air of the mountains given him.

The boys did not hesitate to tell their host something about the strange mission that was the cause of this long journey on their new motorcycles; and Ben seemed to be as deeply interested as Mr. Rideout had been.

"I sure hopes as how you'll find this Judge Whiting, and get home ag'in in time with them papers," he told the boys. "Seems to me I might give you a little information about that same party, 'cause I met Jem Snooks, and he told me he was a-goin' to take 'em up thru the country between Crooked Pond and Cranberry Lake, where the gent owns a heap of land that seems to give signs of holdin' iron ore like that further north where they mines the same."

Of course this was pleasant news to the boys, and as they sat around later on, with a fire burning, because the night air felt a bit chilly up in this Northern country, the Adirondack guide proceeded to make a crude map of the country, which Mark believed would prove of considerable value to him.

It was just at this time that one of the dogs lying by the fire lifted his head and growled. This was a pretty good sign that there might be some one outside; and Bantam, his mind aflame with the previous attempts that had been made to injure their motorcycles, turned a worried face toward his chum.

Before a word could be said, however, there came a pounding at the door, accompanied by a call for help, uttered in a thick and appealing voice. The guide, being a cautious fellow, picked up his gun from a corner before stepping over to open the door, at the same time ordering the two hounds to keep back.

As he threw open the door, after removing the bar, a figure staggered inside the cabin, and sank in a heap on the floor. Imagine the surprise of Mark and his chum when they recognized Ferdy Clifford, with his nose bruised and his lips badly cut, presenting a battered, woebegone appearance.

CHAPTER XIV.

THURSDAY AND FAR FROM HOME.

"OH, MARK! He's been and took a header, too, just like me; only he didn't find a soft place to land!" exclaimed Bantam, as soon as he could find his breath. But Mark already suspected that this might not prove to be the true explanation of the sad condition of the dandified fellow, who had been wont to strut around the streets of Cumminsville and show off his fine clothes, to the envy of certain other boys, whose parents could not afford to buy them such glorious garments.

The guide had bent over the boy who was lying there in a heap, and now helped him over to a chair by the fire. Then the good woman hurried to get him a glass of water, after which she

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brought in a basin and a towel, and proceeded to cleanse his face, so that the extent of his injuries might be seen.

"Looks like somebody might 'a' been cutting you up right bad with their fists, son," the guide ventured to remark; at which Ferdy groaned, and scowled, and then started in to explain.

"I ran afoul of a husky fellow who seemed to be about half-drunk. He insulted me, and when I talked back, you see what he did to me with his fists. And then he took my motorcycle, and went off with it, working the pedals just as if it might be an ordinary bicycle, for the road there was a little downgrade. I was nearly all in, but I kept coming this way, hoping to strike some place where I might get assistance. I'll have the law on him for that, as sure as I live, no matter how much time and money it costs me."

Ferdy meant all he said; and indeed he had been so badly treated that Mark did not blame him for feeling hard toward the wretch who was to blame for his condition.

"S'pose you try and describe him to me, son," suggested the guide. "I knows nigh everybody 'round this section, and mebbe might be able to help you locate him."

"He was big and ugly, and I noticed that he had the forefinger of his left hand missing, which ought to be enough to identify the brute!" Ferdy declared, watching the good woman of the house as she started to prepare another supper.

"It sure does, and I c'n tell you right away you run acrost the toughest case in all this section of kentry," the woods guide went on to say. "His name it's Cale Robbins, and he's been game poacher and hard nut all his life. If so be you could get on to Old Forge, which ain't but a few miles from here, the warden'd like to have a good excuse for arrestin' Cale, who's been too slick fo' him most of the time."

"But I haven't any wheel, and I'll either have to walk, or get you to take me in a wagon," Ferdy continued.

"I'd be willin' to do it, only my wagon ain't to hum, jest now. A neighbor livin' six miles away borrowed the same last week, and ain't fetched her back," was the disappointing reply of the guide.

Mark spoke up at this juncture.

"We happen to be going past Old Forge in the morning, and if you care to take a lift that far I'd be willing to carry you behind my saddle," he said, at which Bantam fairly snorted in disgust, while Ferdy turned fiery red, and muttered: "That's kind of you, Mark, after the rotten way I've acted toward you; and perhaps I'll take you up on your offer."

He looked uncomfortable, and so Mark did not say anything further; but if the latter for a moment imagined that such a kindly act could cause a fellow built on the lines Ferdy Clifford was to change his ways, he had another guess coming, so Bantam believed, tho he made no protest.

Of course their conversation was along different lines now, because they would not want Ferdy to know what their plans might be. And when the guide was quietly told who his late guest had turned out to be, while Ferdy was eating at the other end of the room as well as his swollen lips would admit, he was wrathy enough to have turned the boy out of doors, only Mark begged him not to think of it.

"With his machine gone I reckon his teeth are drawn," the boy went on to remark; "and all we want to make sure of now is that he doesn't have any chance to do our motorcycles damage during the night."

"Count on me to look out for that," the guide told them; and there was a glint in his eye that boded ill for Ferdy should he display the first sign of treachery toward the other boys.

The night passed in peace, and with the morning there was considerable of a stir around the cabin of the woods guide. As luck would have it, a wagon came along headed in the direction of Old Forge just about the time they were thru breakfast; and at a hint from Ben Guffing Ferdy hastened to make arrangements for being transported thither.

Mark did not urge him to keep to the original agreement, because he knew that it would be very disagreeable all around; and besides he felt that Ferdy hated to find himself under any obligations to those whom he had done his best to injure. So they saw him go away, looking as tho he had been thru a thrashing machine and still muttering threats of vengeance against the author of his woes.

Shortly afterwards Mark and his chum went swinging past the wagon, answering the cheery hail of the driver with a fling of an arm; but Ferdy never said a word, and was possibly feeling a new spirit of hatred toward his rivals, just as tho they could in any way be responsible for his painful experience.

Now the boys were near the end of their trip, if only they might have the good luck to run across the gentleman who was prospecting on his land for new fields of iron ore in quantities that would pay for mining the same.

Reaching Old Forge they stopped only long enough to get a cool drink of soda at a tavern, which refreshed them considerably, and then again started off.

Now the rude chart which the woods guide had made would come into good play, and they were satisfied that it had been a fine thing for them when they decided to stop over at the humble cabin home of Ben Guffing, the man who had served as guide to several famous sportsmen.

When noon had come they were still looking for signs of the prospecting party. The region was a desolate one, as fire had only a few years before run thru the woods, and blackened trunks of trees could be seen by the thousand in every direction along the hillsides. Still, that would not interfere with mining operations, if only the judge discovered that there was ore in paying quantities on his property.

"Keep on the watch for signs of smoke!" advised Mark, as they stopped to rest and observe the surrounding country from the top of an elevation. "That was what the guide told me would be our best way of finding the party. They must have some sort of central camp where they spend the nights; and if we can see the smoke of their cooking fire about this time, it would be easy for us to join them."

"Cooking, did you say?" exclaimed Bantam, pressing a hand upon his stomach, as if he would have Mark take notice how flat it seemed just then. "I'd be as happy as a clam to run across anything that had to do with cooking right now, because I'm beginning to feel starved! And Mark, there isn't much chance of meeting up with even a guide's hang-out around a country as dead as this, is there?"

"I'm afraid not, Bantam; and on that account I think we'll have to try to make a meal off what we fetched along, unless something turns up right soon. But hold on—what's that mean?"

"Where? Oh! Seems to me I c'n smell grub cooking right now, Mark!"

"Then you've got the best nose of anybody I ever heard of," laughed his chum; "because, if that is smoke I see away over there, it must be all of five miles off."

He pointed as he spoke, and Bantam was soon able to discover what was meant.

"It is smoke, that's a dead sure thing, Mark," insisted the stout boy, doggedly; "but after all, it may only be one of these silly old trees smoldering."

"Well, as they've been burned all of three years, Ben said, that could hardly be so," Mark asserted. "And as the smoke seems to be straight ahead, we'd better be on the move. On the next rise we'll locate it again, and much closer, until in the end we'll arrive at the camp, if that's what it turns out to be."

"I only hope we don't lose track of it after getting up all these fine anticipations of a spread in the woods," grunted Bantam, as he prepared to follow his comrade down the descent, using his brake to limit his speed.

Turning on the current when at the bottom, they both managed to get a start that carried them splendidly to the crown of the next rise. Here another halt was made so as to enable them to look again for the smoke that was possibly fated to serve them as a signal, and direct them to where the prospecting party might be found.

Once more they were successful, and now the rising pillar could be much more easily seen than before. This might be because they happened to be closer; but Bantam chose to believe that there was another explanation.

"You see they're cooking dinner at the camp," he went on to declare, "and that would mean a bigger fire needed. Oh, let's be hurrying along, Mark! How mean we'd feel if we got there just in time to find that the last bite had gone down. Why, that would keep us waitin' all of half an hour, till another lot was cooked."

Mark himself was willing to hurry, tho from different reasons, and the consequence was that shortly afterward they sighted the tents of the prospecting party up on the side of the hill.

It was necessary to leave the motorcycles alongside the road while they climbed upward; but then, with Ferdy eliminated, there hardly seemed to be any danger. And to the great joy of Bantam they arrived at the camp just as dinner was ready to be served.

There was a disappointment awaiting the two brave lads, however, since the judge was away somewhere among the mountains with his guides, and not expected back until late in the afternoon. So, while they were hospitably received, they could only sit around after dinner had been eaten, counting the minutes until the prospector turned up again.

That was a long afternoon to both boys, tho Mark utilized some of the time in going over his plans, so as to know what to do in case they could not leave until Thursday morning dawned.

It was beginning to grow dusk before voices were heard and three men came wearily into camp, one of whom Bantam recognized as the judge, who had been at the Lightfoot house several times, transacting business for the rich widow.

When the judge discovered who the two boys were, and why they had come away up there into the wilds of the Adirondacks hunting for him, he was thunderstruck. A hasty examination of the papers which he had along with him nearly stunned him; for he realized that in some strange manner he had fallen into the same error as Mrs. Lightfoot with regard to the limit time, and could hardly believe his eyes when he discovered that it was this Thursday instead of on the following week, that he should be on hand, or at least have the documents there to save the contract that would mean the winning or losing of many thousands of dollars for the widow.

Mark explained to him just how he had mapped out his plan for getting the papers on to Cumminsville in time to save the day; and Judge Whiting real-

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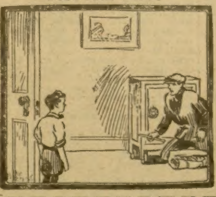
PICTURE No. 13



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ized that he was dealing with a very bright young fellow, who would accomplish what he had planned if it lay in the range of human possibility.

There was really nothing else that could be done but make a race for the nearest railroad station, and there take a train for Cumminsville, which could be reached, so Mark figured out, by five o'clock, if no accident detained them on the road.

He had already decided that Bantam must remain with the prospecting party, some of whom would see that he was taken to the railroad later on; because starting in the morning it would take a fast clip to reach the little town before the arrival of the one train that could get him to the home port in time.

All this was arranged, and even the disappointed Bantam agreed it was for the best, because that patched tire was beginning to show signs of needing vulcanizing and might give way at any moment, forcing a delay that must prove fatal.

And soon after dawn broke, Mark shot away on his machine, headed for the railroad town many miles distant.

CHAPTER XV.

ACROSS THE SPAN.

WHEN Mark Fletcher started away from the camp of the prospectors for iron ore, up in the vicinity of Cranberry Lake in the Adirondacks, he had figured things out to a fraction, knew about the distance he would have to go, and believed that if he could only keep up a certain speed he would be able to arrive at his destination in time to catch that train.

Of course, this was barring any sort of accident that might detain him; and in the case of motorcycles this is something that must always be figured on. When a rider keeps going for a full day without some part of his machinery requiring attention he counts himself lucky, and that day goes down in his log of the journey marked with a red cross, because it had been a picnic indeed.

For the first few miles everything seemed to go on like clockwork. His engine purred under him with that steady rhythm that is the delight of the rider's heart; and while bad patches occurred in the road, as might be expected, they were not of a nature to cause him to slow up in his swift pace.

All the same Mark was glad that Bantam was not along with him just then, for in that case his progress would have been less rapid; besides, there was always a triple chance of the clumsy chum making some unlucky calculation that would bring about trouble. Then there was that poor tire on the front wheel of his comrade's machine; it had shown unmistakable signs of giving way, which would necessitate the loss of valuable time in repairing the leak. Yes, Mark believed he had done the wise thing when insisting that Bantam remain behind, and come on home at the earliest opportunity.

He knew that in all probability the other had repaired to the peak close at hand, where he might have occasional glimpses of his speeding chum, by making use of the splendid field-glasses owned by the repentant judge. And could he have told when such vistas opened up, Mark would have only too gladly waved his red bandanna, as a signal of hope and good cheer. Then all of a sudden a new element was injected into that wild ride.

Mark was destined to meet up with difficulties that possibly he had never taken into consideration when laying out the schedule of his journey to the railroad town.

He heard the plain "honk" of an auto horn over to the left, and, looking in that quarter, what was his surprise and disgust to discover the big red racing car coming along at a reckless speed at right angles to the road on which he, Mark, was at that minute progressing.

Undoubtedly the Clifford crowd had been scouring the country searching for the boys, or possibly hoping to run across the camp of prospectors, meaning to accomplish their ends in some fashion.

Mark sized up the situation at a glance. He saw that he would be able to pass the junction of the two roads with some margin to spare before the swift-running racing car could turn the bend. Possibly he would have been a quarter or a third of a mile to the good; and after that it promised to be a straight-away dash at a pace which threatened all manner of perils, should the slightest accident happen.

But Mark was fully determined not to give in. He had those precious papers safe in an inner pocket, and they were going to get to Mrs. Lightfoot before 6 that evening, or he would know the reason why not. So he shut his teeth hard together and bent himself to the task of beating the red racer to the little railroad town.

What would happen after he got there he could not say, tho secretly he feared that the unscrupulous Mr. Clifford, finding himself balked in his design of making him delay, might cause his arrest on some trivial and absurd ground, just so as to bring about his detention for some hours.

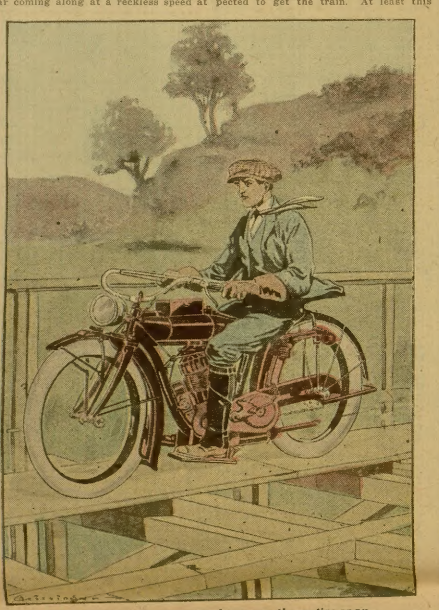
But Mark was not borrowing trouble. His first object was to leave these persistent pursuers in the lurch, if possible. In good time he would take up the next question as it arose; one at a time was enough.

Altho it was a risky proposition to glance backward at any time, still Mark found occasions to do this when sweeping around some turn of the road. He saw that he had a fair start, and unless his eyes deceived him he was holding his own, in spite of every effort put out by the reckless chauffeur of the racing car.

They were both fairly tearing along that country road in a manner never before seen; and the inmates of sundry cabins which they passed rushed to the doors to ascertain what all the row could be about. All they saw was a cloud of dust down the road, and a red car coming madly toward them, to whirl past, and also vanish in another dust pack.

If, as might be possible, Bantam was witnessing something of this chase, how his heart must be up in his throat with suspense; and with what a sense of pride must he be observing his chum's gallant fight to save the papers that meant so much to his widowed mother.

Mark now began to look ahead with more or less eagerness, for he fancied that he must be within a few miles of the little railroad town, where he expected to get the train. At least this increase of pace was going to make him arrive in good season, which would be one point gained.



Mark guided the motorcycle across the entire span.

As he started down a slope he could see the valley spread out before him, and even noted the railroad track leading into and thru the village that nestled there. If nothing happened then, he should be at the station inside of five minutes; and he could imagine the red car following in his wake, which fact was not a very pleasant one for the hunted boy, as he might expect all manner of trouble from the determined plotters.

Just then Mark made a startling discovery that gave him a thrill.

Quite a wide, and probably deep, river passed thru the valley, which the road he was pursuing crossed on a bridge. This structure was now undergoing repairs, and a force of several men seemed to be working in plain sight!

Imagine the boy's disgust, and even horror, when he saw that the entire planking constituting the flooring of the bridge had been taken up, saving a narrow strip not over two feet or so in width, which was being used for a footway while the work of repairs went on.

Naturally the boy slowed up as he drew near the bridge. He felt terribly disappointed at the prospect of being halted here, with the papers falling into the hands of the enemy; or at least his being detained long enough so that he would surely miss the one train that could take him home in time.

First of all, Mark wondered whether he could not swim the river, and then make a wild run for the town just a mile or so away. Then, as he came closer, he began to entertain a wild scheme that he never would have dreamed of attempting to carry out only for the desperate conditions that confronted him.

With a steady hand at the helm he believed that it was possible to take a reliable motorcycle across that two-foot planking! So far as he could see it was clear all across. He shouted excitedly at one laborer who chanced to be blocking the way; and the workman, suddenly comprehending the wild scheme of the daring lad, waved his arms as tho seeking to dissuade him; but when he saw that Mark had actually started across, he hastened to vacate, and find a new lodgment on some of the stringers close by.

With his heart almost ceasing to beat, and his eyes glued on that narrow strip of planking that spelled safety, Mark guided his motorcycle across the entire span. When he struck the solid ground on the further shore he gave a shout that was echoed by the workmen, who had watched his dizzy progress with the deepest of interest.

The red racer had come to a halt close on the other side, as Mark saw when he ventured to turn his head. Those aboard were clambering out of it, as tho bent on crossing afoot, and hurrying to the town, in the hope that they might arrive before the train came in.

Had there been any possibility of such a thing happening, Mark was determined to make further use of his machine, and give them the slip.

But he had hardly reached the station before he heard the whistle of the coming train, the time having been slightly changed. Only for the increased speed which he had been compelled to make Mark must have missed connections; so that after all it had proven a blessing in disguise.

He made hasty arrangements with the agent at the station to have his motorcycle shipped by express if so be the baggageman on the train refused to handle the same; but it happened that there was an accommodating fellow aboard, and he found a way of fixing it so that the motorcycle could be taken along, after what little gasoline there remained in the tank had been ejected.

As he sat there in the baggage car, and looked out of the door, Mark saw his defeated pursuers shaking their fists at him in the near distance, all of them being too out of breath with running to even shout.

Fearing that the resourceful Mr. Clifford might still telegraph along the line and have him arrested, so as to hold him over night, Mark made a confidant of the baggageman, and even intrusted him with the papers, which he promised to see got to Cumminsville before six that evening, if he had to send his brother on as a special messenger from the town where his train connected with the other road.

But nothing of the kind happened. Perhaps Mr. Clifford feared to expose his hand, or it might be he felt that the boy who could cross that narrow strip of planking on his motorcycle would be able to outwit him in any event.

At just five o'clock that afternoon Mark handed the papers to Mrs. Lightfoot, who had a lawyer present with her, to attend to all legal necessities. And in that way did the motorcycle boys win out in the race against time.

Bantam did not get back home until late on the following day; but as soon as he arrived his first [illegible] [illegible] was:

"Did you make it? Gosh! but I've been in a sweat ever since I saw that red car buzzing after you. But they told us at the bridge, where we had to get out and walk, how you crossed that plank on your machine. Tell me you got here on time, Mark. But what's the use in my asking, when you're grinning for all that's out? I can read the answer in your face. Bully for us, I say! We did it, didn't we, Mark?"

"We sure did, Bantam; and for once that smart business man, Mr. Clifford, woke up the wrong customers when he tackled us. And Ferdy is back home, with the worst-looking face you ever saw. He got his machine, tho it's fit for the scrap-heap only; but then his

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new one's come to hand. And I wonder if he'll keep on trying to count us his rivals of the road after what happened?"

"Can the leopard change his spots, Mark?" asked Bantam, wisely. "Well, then, as long as Ferdy Clifford is alive and kicking, and we all live in this town, there's going to be trouble between us and him. But who cares for expenses? Gimme two cents worth of gingersnaps! We won out, and the country's safe. Now p'r'aps we c'n make new plans for that great old Niagara trip. But I'm nearly starved to death, Mark, so please come home with me till I clean out the pantry of the good things I reckon my maw has got ready against the time when the band plays 'Lo, the Conquering Hero Comes,' which means me."

The End.

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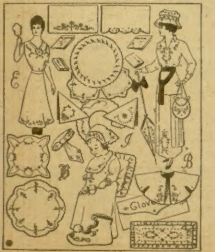

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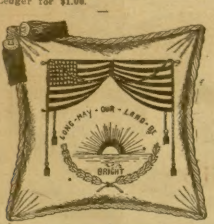

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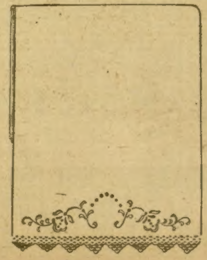

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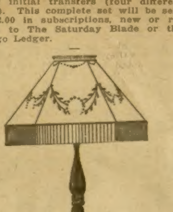

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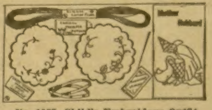

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* * *

Beetles.

One of the most amazing things in natural history is the way in which beetles have triumphed in the struggle for existence, says Popular Science. Of all creatures they are by far the most numerous, no fewer than 150,000 distinct species having been identified—three times the number of backboned animals.

Beetles are wonderfully adaptable. They are found practically everywhere—in the frost-bound tracts of Iceland and in the hot desert sands of Africa; on the highest mountains, under the ground, and as fossil, in the deepest strata; on land and in water; on plants, among stones, and in wood and earth; and even in the very craters of volcanoes.

But there is one place where no beetle has yet been found—it is the inhospitable land of Spitzbergen, to the north of Russia. Here are mammals, birds, fish, mollusks, crustaceans, a few insects of varied species, and many spiders, but not a single beetle. While other insects have succeeded in some way in migrating from the mainland, the beetles have apparently been unable to cross the wide, icy waters.

* * *

The Modern Era.

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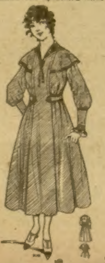

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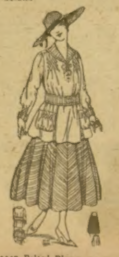

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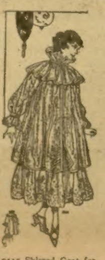

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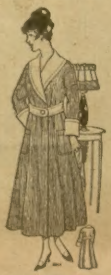
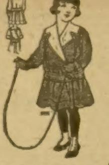


8014 Dressing Gown, Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust.



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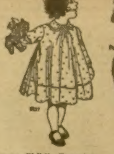

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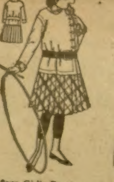
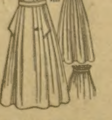


8790 Girl's Russian Blouse, 10 to 14 years.



9130 Two or Three-Piece Skirt, 24 to 30 waist.

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Here is the way we will do it: To every one who will send us one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger we will send absolutely free five pattern coupons. Each coupon will be good for one pattern and you can select the patterns from those illustrated in any issue of the Chicago Ledger. When you see a pattern that you like all you have to do is to send us a coupon and it will be sent to you at once. In this way you will have hundreds of patterns from which to pick the five that you will be entitled to, and you have all the time you need to pick out the ones you want.

These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making, with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc., so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

We treat old and new customers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber send in a dollar and we will send you the five pattern coupons and extend your subscription one year from the time it now expires.

To get these five coupons entitling you to five patterns, fill out the blank below and enclose it with one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger. Do this now—today! No woman should be without the Ledger's Pattern Coupon Book. Be among the thousands of women who will get these coupons.

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THE CHICAGO LEDGER, 500 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed please find one dollar for a year's subscription to the Chicago Ledger. This entitles me to Five Pattern Coupons. **Canada Subscription Price $1.50 per year.**

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or R. F. D..
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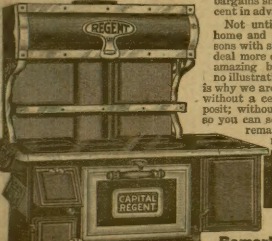
If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number.) Coupons good for six months.

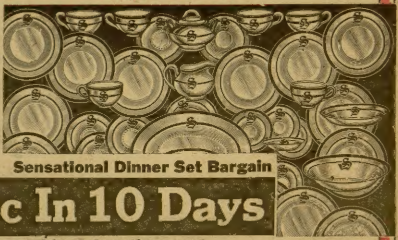
No Money In Advance

Four Wonderful Bargains!

Just to prove to you that we can save you big money on everything needed for furnishing the home we will send you any one, your choice, of the wonderful bargains shown on this page, without one cent in advance.

Not until you see them in your own home and make point-by-point comparisons with similar articles costing a great deal more can you begin to realize what amazing bargains these really are, for no illustrations can do them justice. That is why we are willing to send them to you without a cent in advance; without a deposit; without even a promise to buy; just so you can see and judge for yourself the remarkable values we offer in this record-breaking sale.





Sensational Dinner Set Bargain

Only 50c In 10 Days

Order Direct From This Advertisement

Order by No. MK232 without reservoir or No. MK233 with reservoir. Range comes complete with high warming closet with full length shelf, convenient for keeping prepared dishes warm. Has Duplex Grates which by a simple turn of stove crank can be converted to use coal or wood. Large pouch feed is provided for putting in coal. Oven 18 in. wide by 19 in. deep by 11 in. high, is well built and braced to prevent buckling, and has a non-heating wood handle—a most desirable feature. Wire oven rack is furnished. Oven door is spring balanced, drop type, forming a shelf when lowered. Soot clean-out door below oven. Cast iron fire door, ash pit door and frame below. Body constructed of polished blue steel. Firebox measures 17½ in. by 6 in. by 6 in. Cooking top, without reservoir, 26 in. by 34 in.; with reservoir, 25 in. by 40 in.

Remarkable Range Bargain

Where else can you buy a steel range of this size, as solidly built, and such a wonderful cooker and baker as the famous Capital Regent for only $22.95? Yet that is all we ask for this splendid range, provided you are perfectly satisfied after you see and try it. We don't ask you to send a cent in advance; give security, or even promise to buy it. Mail coupon and we will ship you the range. If you think it the grandest cooking and baking range you ever saw, and you decide to keep it, pay only 50c in 10 days and balance of our special bargain price ($22.95 without reservoir, or $28.95 with reservoir) on terms given below.

You couldn't buy as handsome, as durable, or as fine a cooking and baking range as the "Capital" Regent, at anywhere near this low price. Mail coupon today and let us send you this magnificent range for your free trial. No money in advance—only 50c in 10 days, if you decide to keep it. Otherwise return it at our freight expense. Price, without reservoir, $22.95; only 50c in 10 days; $1.75 per month. With 12 qt. reservoir, encased type, lift out porcelain tank, $28.95; only 50c in 10 days; $2.00 per month.

No. MK228. Sensational 48-Piece Monogram Dinner Set Bargain. Never in your life have you had a chance to get such an elegant set of dishes at such an unheard of low price. Mail coupon right now—today. Send no money. We will at once ship you the complete set with your monogram initial in gold on every piece. Be sure to state initial wanted. If you think this the biggest dinner set bargain you ever heard of and wish to keep them, just pay 50c in 10 days after dishes arrive and then 50c a month until our special get-acquainted bargain price of $3.85 is paid. If you do not wish to keep them, return at our freight expense. Here is your opportunity to gratify your wish to set your table with as exquisite a set of dishes as the heart of any woman could desire. They are of splendid quality pure white Porcelain, decorated with gold bands and your own initial in gold on every piece. This is the very latest idea in dinnerware decoration.

Complete set consists of 6 dinner plates; 6 breakfast plates; 6 cups; 6 saucers; 6 fruit dishes; 6 new style soup coupes; 6 butter plates; 1 deep open vegetable dish; 2 meat platters; 1 sugar bowl and cover (2 pieces); 1 cream pitcher. Each dish is full size for family use and guaranteed perfect.

Exact Size and Style of Initial on Every Piece

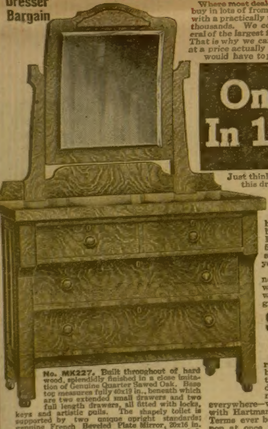
Only 10,000 Sets Only 10,000 sets will be sent out on this amazing No-Money-In-Advance Offer. This limited number will be snapped up mighty quick at this rediculously low price and when they are gone no more are to be had. So act at once. Probably never again will you have an opportunity to get such a magnificent set of dishes at such a low price and on such easy terms. Even the Great House of Hartman, with its $12,000,000 capital and resources and its tremendous buying power, is seldom in position to offer such a sensational bargain as this. You couldn't begin to duplicate this set of dishes anywhere else for anything like this price.

Be sure to state the initial you wish on your set.

HARTMAN Will Trust You

Never Before Such Amazing Values as These

Matchless Dresser Bargain



Where most dealers and even mail order concerns buy in lots of from a dozen to a hundred, Hartman's, with a practically unlimited buying power, buys in thousands. We control the entire outputs of several of the largest furniture factories in the country. That is why we can offer you this elegant dresser at a price actually lower than dealers, themselves, would have to pay the manufacturer.

Only 50c In 10 Days

Just think of it—our direct price to you for this dresser is only $9.97! But you don't have to send a cent in advance—just the coupon. We want you to see it in your home—examine its solid construction—see how elegantly it sets off a room—before you even decide to keep it. If you do, you may send us only 50c in 10 days and the balance in small monthly payments so easy you will scarcely miss the money.

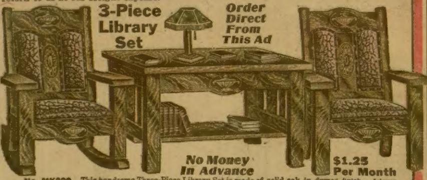
It is an article of such practical necessity that no home should be without it. When you see it, you will say that it is positively the greatest bargain you ever heard of.

SEND NO MONEY
Just the Coupon

No references, no guarantee, no remittance—just send the coupon below and we will at once send the dresser to you—no waiting; no delay; no C. O. D. This offer is made to prove to every woman, everywhere—without cost—that it pays to deal with Hartman's on the easiest payment Credit Terms ever before offered. Send us the coupon at once for this wonderful Dresser Bargain so you will not be disappointed, as we have only 1600 of this particular style.

No. MK227. Built throughout of hard wood, splendidly finished in a close imitation of Genuine Quarter Sawed Oak. Base top measures fully 40x19 in., beneath which are two extended small drawers and two full length drawers, all fitted with locks, keys and artistic pulls. The shapely toilet is supported by two unique upright standards; genuine French Beveled Plate Mirror, 20x16 in. Comes complete with casters, securely crated. Price only $9.97. No Money in Advance. Only 50c in ten days—75c per month.

We want you to see for yourself, without advance payment, that this handsome solid oak three-piece Library Set is the grandest bargain ever offered. We will ship the complete set promptly. When you receive it, examine it carefully and, if it is not just what you want, return it at our freight expense. If you are perfectly satisfied and decide to keep it, pay only 50c in ten days—and the balance of our low bargain price of only $15.85 at the rate of only $1.25 per month. If you are not thoroughly delighted with this wonderful bargain set—in fact, if there is the slightest sense of disappointment on your part after testing it for 10 days—return to us at our freight expense.



No. MK229. This handsome Three-Piece Library Set is made of solid oak in fumed finish. Adams period design. Table is unique in design, yet very practical and exceptionally durable in construction. The table top measures 38 x 26 inches. Stands 29 inches high with large 7-inch connecting shelf. Legs cut from 2-in. stock, fitted with nickeled slides; 5½ in. center panel with artistic embossing; 4 in. apron trimmed with Adams Urn carving. Chair and rocker of solid oak with genuine quarter-sawed arms. Finish, trimmings and carvings match table perfectly. Chair 41 in. high; rocker 37 in. high, width 28 in.; arms 4x21 in.; 19 in. between arms. Seats 19½ x 20 in. filled with wood fibre and moss. Supported with 6 heavy steel springs resting on steel channel bars. Top slat 6 in.; front rail 4½ in. Seats and backs upholstered in guaranteed Spanish imitation leather. Order by No. MK229.

FREE! Hartman's Mammoth Bargain Catalog

This Mammoth Bargain Book brings right into your home—**no matter where you live**—an enormous offering of more than 8,000 bargains in Home Furnishings and Household Goods, equal in extent and variety to the combined stock of more than a score of the largest furniture stores—at lower prices and on easier payment terms than any store, manufacturer or mail order house has ever offered.

Remember—always—that HARTMAN CREDIT is **real help**—the most practical, liberal, sincere and friendly aid humanly possible to render. It is this earnest, persistent desire to give its customers higher quality, lower prices and better payment terms that has made the name of "HARTMAN'S," with its 60 years' experience and $12,000,000 capital, a household word in over 2,000,000 American Homes.

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Place an X in ☐ opposite bargain wanted, fill in and mail us coupon.

Dishes MK228 ☐ Library Set MK229 ☐ Dresser MK227 ☐
Range MK232 without reservoir ☐ MK233 with reservoir ☐

If I keep it, I will pay 50c in ten days after arrival of shipment and balance in monthly payments as per prices and terms quoted in this advertisement.

Name..

P. O. Box, Address..

Town..State........ 55

If only catalog is wanted, write name and address on lines above.

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